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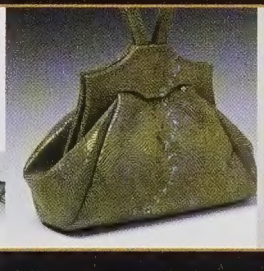

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REVOLUTION

SNAG

CONFERENCE: MAY 20TH - 23RD, 2009

SPEAKERS:

Stanley Lechtzin - Keynote
Leo Caballero
Paul Greenhalgh
Myra Mimlitsch Gray
Neri Oxman
Camille Paglia
Albert Paley
Panel, "Revolution/Evolution," moderated by Helen Drutt English, the panel features: Marianne Aav, Fritz Falk and Yvonne G.J.M. Joris

EXHIBITIONS:

Philadelphia Art Alliance - Stanley Lechtzin, Retrospective
Wexler Gallery - Neoteric Matter: New Studio Jewelry
The University of the Arts at the Philadelphia Art Alliance - rEvolution: 100 Years of Jewelry/Metals
Snyderman/Works Gallery - The Enamel Experience: International Badges
The Wood Turning Center - Corkscrews, Bottle Openers, and The Art of Opening
Tyler School of Art/Temple University - Metals/Jewelry/CAD-CAM, MFA Alumni Exhibition
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Celebrating 40 Years

TIMING IS EVERYTHING, as they say in show business, and the time couldn't be better for our relaunch of *Metalsmith*. This sharp new magazine is being inaugurated in the same month as president elect Barack Obama, whose campaign mantra was "Time for a change." Indeed, this publication was ripe for transformation. Ten years have passed since *Metalsmith*'s last redesign, and our layout needed to keep pace with the dynamic field. To insure that the form matched the vitality of content, we enlisted celebrated graphic designer Luke Hayman of Pentagram, whose artistry is apparent in these pages.

For this new incarnation, we sought a design that was as smart and seductive as the works we regularly feature. Along with capturing the objects' material richness, we aimed to present them within a human context, bringing more people and bodies into the mix. We also wanted to address the issue of scale, and the magazine's intimate trim size reflects this key concern. Not least, we played up the *smith* in "metalsmith," stressing the value of creation, whether in metal or other materials.

We've also tweaked the pacing of our articles and introduced two departments, "In Fashion" and "Look," to extend our range of coverage. And this issue's content proves especially timely: witness an image of Michelle Obama, our new First Lady, in an extravagant Tom Binns necklace. Likewise, our feature on "Metalsmiths Against War" taps into current events and explores the unique contribution of metalsmiths to antiwar protest. In addition, we showcase the most recent work of MacArthur Grant recipient Tom Joyce, whose production has continued to expand in scale and conceptual scope.

We are living in a thrilling historical era. In spite of the vast pressures, the doors are thrust open to fresh possibility. Equipped with a bold face and renewed purpose, we at *Metalsmith* intend to indulge the creative license that is every citizen's birthright. For a good time, join us.... ●

SUZANNE RAMLJAK
EDITOR

metalsmith

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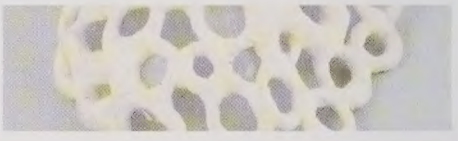

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Five Views of Contemporary Swedish Jewelry

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Sofia Bjorkman
Hanna Hedman
Auli Laitinen
Helena Lindholm

Curator: Tracy Steepy

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Pia Aleborg
Neckpiece. Apartfrom Series
Gold Plated Chain, Electric Cord
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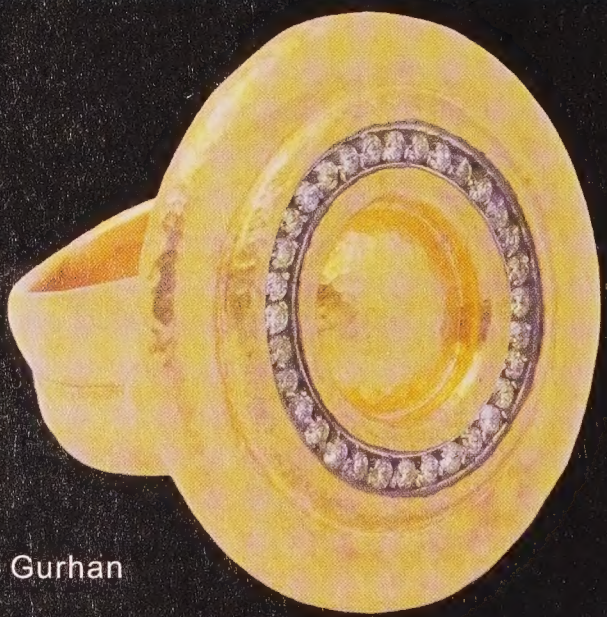

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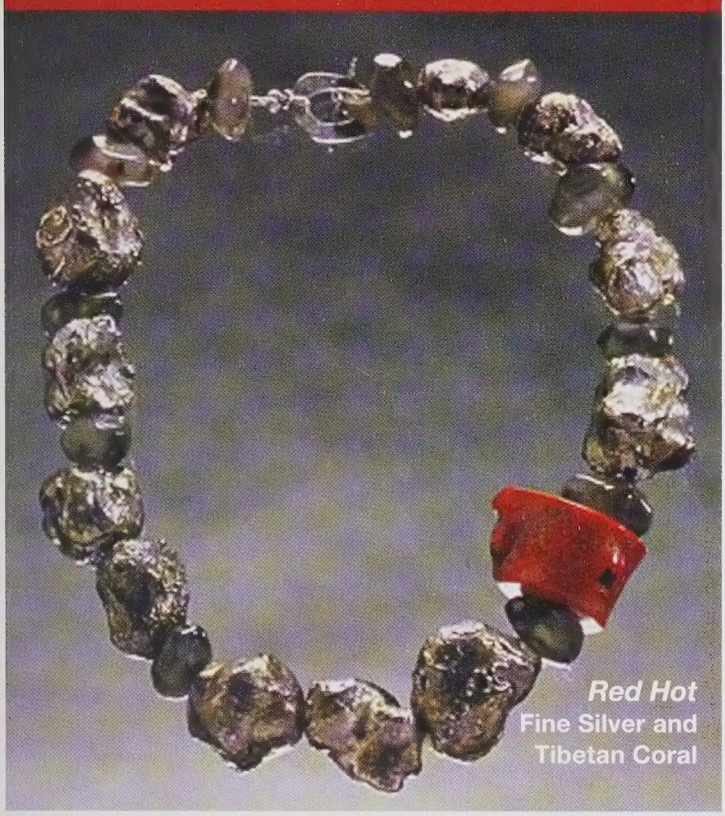

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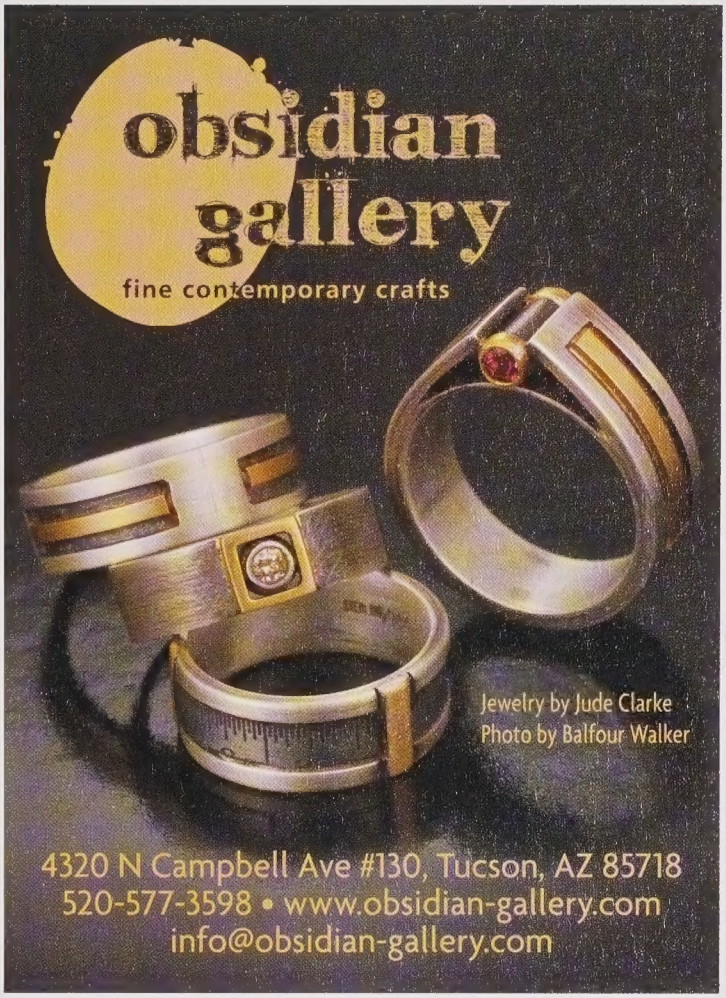

Jewelry by Jude Clarke
Photo by Balfour Walker

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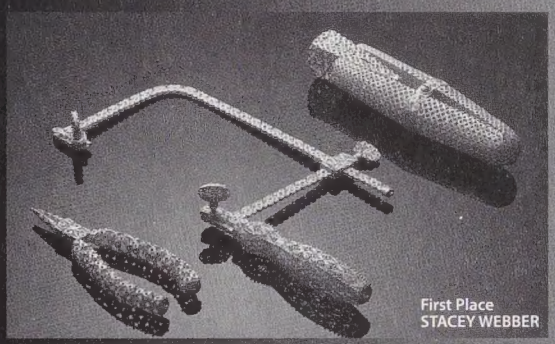

First Place
STACEY WEBBER

Third Place
HELEN CARNAC

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MOLLY B. EPSTEIN

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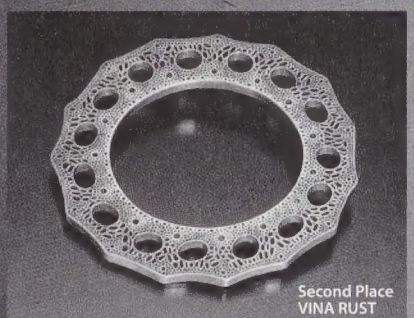

Second Place
VINA RUST

JILLIAN MOORE

MEIL-MARGARITA PAREDES

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METAL Inclinations 2008-09 Award Winners:
FIRST PLACE, Society for Midwest Metalsmiths Award– Stacy Webber
SECOND PLACE, Hauser & Miller Award– Vina Rust
THIRD PLACE, Rio Grande Award– Helen Carnac
AWARDS OF MERIT, Pasternak Findings Award– Miel-Margarita Paredes, Namu Cho, Molly B. Epstein and Jillian Moore

METAL inclinations

Thomas Gentille sets his keen eye on an array of brooches

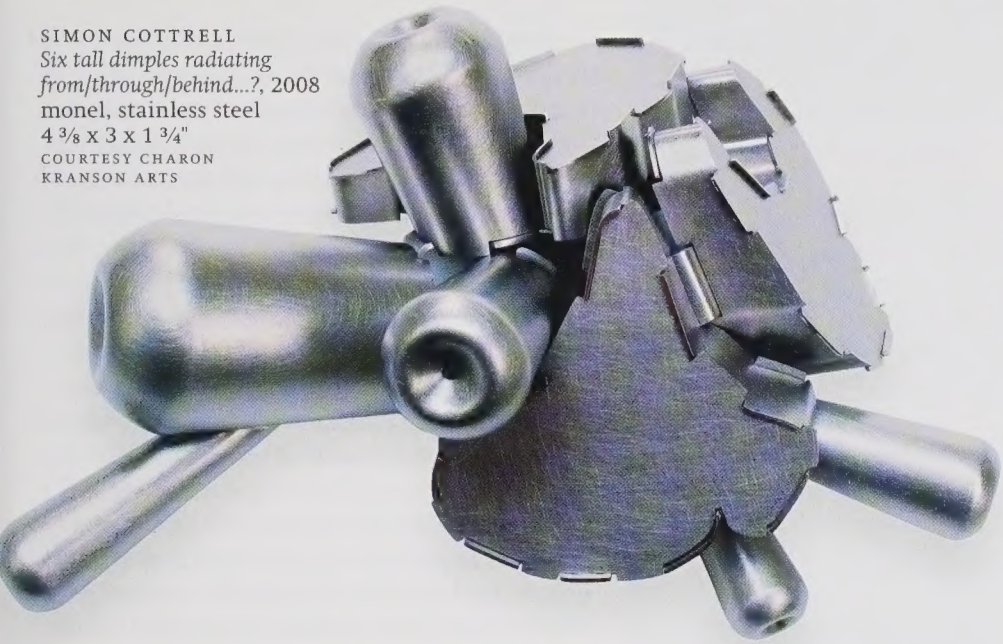
IN THIS NEW department dedicated to looking, we showcase works deemed worthy of further contemplation by discerning guest observers. Our first contributor is the eminent jeweler Thomas Gentille, who made his selection entirely from the offerings on view at SOFA New York, in June 2008. Gentille requested that all of the pieces be reproduced in *actual scale*, and we were happy to oblige.

GIOVANNI SICURO
Untitled, 2007
silver, enamel
1 ¾ x 1 ¼ x 1 ½"
COURTESY
ORNAMENTUM GALLERY

JAMIE BENNETT
Posteriori 13, 2008
enamel, copper, silver
2 ½ x 2 ½ x 3 ⅜"
COURTESY SIENNA GALLERY

BETTINA DITTLMANN
Gratitude, 1998
iron, pyrite, solder
4 x 4 x ⅜"
COURTESY JEWELERSWERK
GALLERY

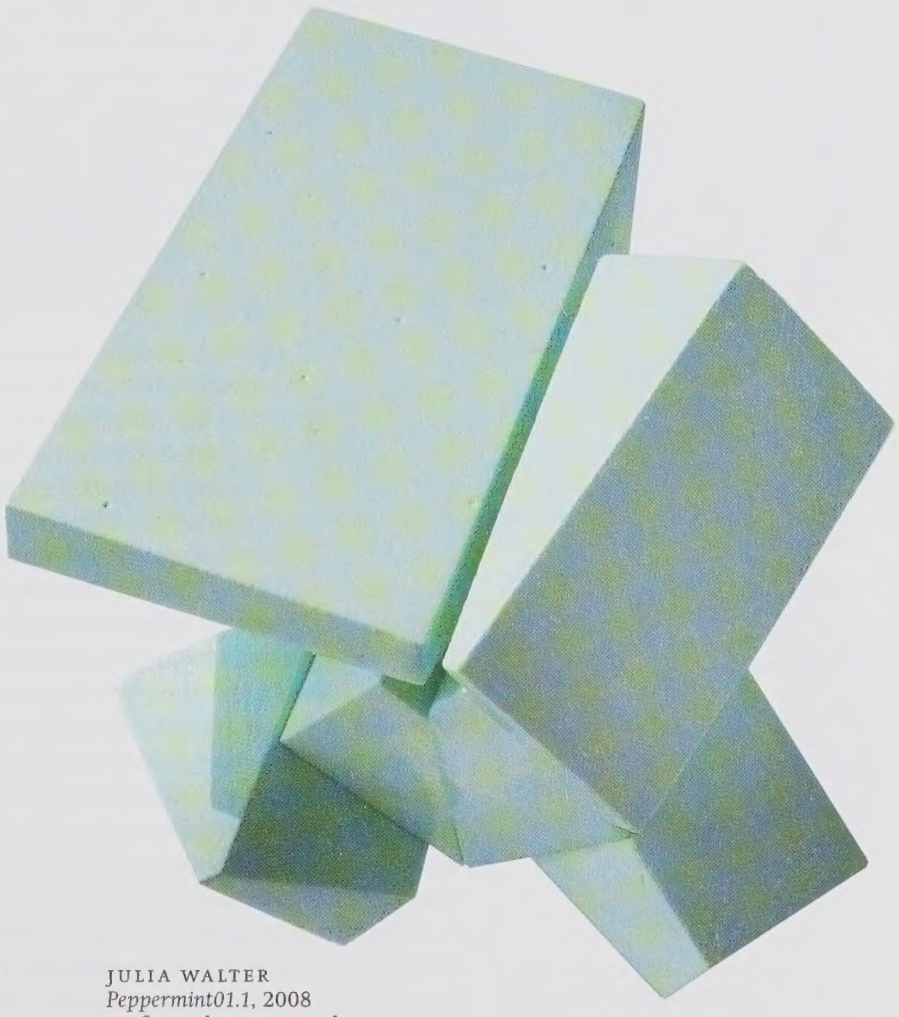
DANIEL DICAPRIO
Fruition, 2008
blackwood, silver
3 x 3 x 3"
COURTESY CHARON KRANSON ARTS



SIMON COTTRELL
Six tall dimples radiating from/through/behind...?, 2008
monel, stainless steel
4 3/8 x 3 x 1 3/4"
COURTESY CHARON KRANSON ARTS

MELANIE BILENKER
Rings, 2008
18k gold, ebony, resin, hair
1 5/8 x 1 3/4 x 3/8"
COURTESY SIENNA GALLERY

RUUDT PETERS
Interno Canova, 1990
silver, gold
2 3/4 x 2 3/4 x 1 1/2"
COURTESY ORNAMENTUM GALLERY



KARL FRITSCH
Brooch, 1998
oxidized silver, diamonds
1 3/8 x 1/2 x 1/8"
COURTESY JEWELERSWERK GALLERY

JULIA WALTER
Peppermint01.1, 2008
pu-foam, lacquer, steel
4 3/8 x 2 3/4 x 1 1/4"
COURTESY CHARON KRANSON ARTS

Harriete Estel Berman

A colorful visit with the reigning empress of tin

BY JENNIFER CROSS GANS

FOR A PERFECT study in contrasts, consider the home and studio of Harriete Estel Berman. Picture an attractive house on a tidy hillside cul-de sac in San Mateo, California. It differs from its neighbors with its manicured miniature Japanese garden in the front, and a second in back, cultivated by Berman when she needs relaxation and contemplation. Propped at the front door is a mammoth color pencil, a trailer for her latest artistic project.

Her studio, which occupies the garage, is something else entirely. At first sight it is the most cluttered, colorful, delightful, and potentially hazardous place I have ever encountered. Berman, an artist of many talents, is currently empress of tin. Several benches are festooned with bits and pieces of work in progress, and swathes of bright tin tops await sorting. Hanging from the rafters are upside-down vintage tin doll houses. Packed in between are the usual tools of the jeweler's trade, including a soldering station; a long rack of pliers, snips, and pinking shears; and a rolling mill, shear, and bending brake.

Harriete Estel Berman (left) and assistant Emiko Oye sorting tin pieces in her San Mateo, California studio.

Berman has rarely met a piece of decorated tin she doesn't like, and never one she can't find a use for. "I've been working with tin for more than 20 years," she says. "I may not like it, but I keep everything because I may need it later." She doesn't buy sheets of preprinted material, but is not above scrounging for it, like the time she wangled more than 100 free boxes of Penguin Caffeinated Mints. She also has some 50 family members and friends making donations of empty cookie, candy, and other tins.

Despite what looks like clutter, Berman's studio is extremely well organized. The larger flat sheets are carefully stored in vertical racks. Later these are cut, sorted, and filed by color or subject, including men, women, children, toys, fruit, company brands, and UPC codes. During my visit, Berman and her part-time assistant, jeweler Emiko Oye, were sorting through hundreds of them in search of some artistic matches. It was hard to keep away, despite Berman's warning to avoid the razor-sharp edges.

Individual tins of course must be disassembled, which is harder than it looks, requiring considerable hand strength, sharp cutters, and heavy-duty pinking shears. Cutting circles is particularly tricky. Die-forming and bending tin is also difficult, and as many as 50 percent of pieces split or crack in the process. Handling the material is punishing, and usually requires gloves. Fortunately, Berman is extremely well trained, with a BFA at Syracuse University, an MFA in metalworking from the Tyler School of Art, and more than seven years as a bench jeweler, doing design and repair work. She knows from the inside out both how jewelry is made and how it can be deconstructed, and has both confidence in her abilities, and the courage to "wing it."

Tin is a ready-made medium for Berman, who combines technical skills and an artist's eye with a well developed social conscience. As a young woman she became—and still is—an outspoken feminist, expressing her anger at women's traditional roles in an outstanding series of handmade miniature, multi-media domestic appliances. Today she is more sophisticated and cynical, but also more fun-loving.

One delicately critical masterpiece is a leaning stack of teacups, the kind your great-grandmother might have used for afternoon tea, maybe cocking her little finger. Overall, Berman has made more than 200 individual cups, not to mention teapots and other domestic items. This pile looks wonkier than the leaning tower of Pisa, but is firmly attached with rods or magnets. Is it a riff on older traditions of femininity? An outtake from *Alice in Wonderland*? Or a reflection of the fragile and outrageous balance of our consumerist society, head over heels in love with "lifestyle"? Next to it are two oversize mugs filled with what appears to be foaming hot chocolate, both

Tin is a ready-made medium for Berman, who combines technical skills and an artist's eye with a well developed social conscience.

exuding "drink me!" but in fact filled with an experimental plaster and plastic mix concocted by Berman and Oye.

Poking fun at national brands is a favorite pastime. Some of the more colorful ads show up in mini-sculptures, wall plaques, and picture frames, in the kids' lunchboxes that Berman uses as purses, oversize beads, and her liberal use of manufacturers' UPC codes. A series she is currently designing shows California brands, transformed into huge, often juicy bracelets. These will be marketed in miniature wooden crates, labeled with her personal brand, *Bermaid.*

Another longtime passion of Berman's is recycling. Early projects included tin bird houses, which she gave to friends and family. When she became dismayed at the amount of water her neighbors splashed on their lawns, she made table-sized lawn sculptures out of tin. These led to her recruiting three assistants (plus volunteers) to make a nine-foot-square "lawn" from 18-inch-square panels. The whole project comprised 32,000 tin grass blades, each mounted on an individual slit in the base, and took a year to finish.

"A part of me can't dispense with social accountability," Berman admitted. When her son, now in college, had troubles in school, rebelling against standardized teaching and testing, she turned her laser beam eyes on the educational system. Her first shot was an installation called *Measuring Compliance.* Facing the corner was a small desk and a third-grade chair covered with a child-sized straitjacket. The floor was composed of used rulers, yardsticks, and recycled wood labeled with such dictatorial messages as "sit in your seat and be quiet," and a tin spelling list saying "Compete," "Comprehend," and "Compulsory."

Berman's current project is even more ambitious. She's trying to collect 100,000 pencils, each of which will be hand drilled to make a 12-foot-wide x 25- to 30-foot-long woven bell curve. "Testing is only one measure of performance," said Berman. "It affects all aspects of teaching, and it's so myopic. Why not see what kind of learners the students are?"

Berman is a relentless organizer. Though assertive and on occasions sharp-tongued, she's also a good role model, encouraging to younger artists who admire her skill, persistence, and marketing ability. Her work is amply documented on the web, in handsome brochures, and the occasional video. She's also hoping to recruit other jewelers interested in using the online craft boutique etsy.com and is measuring its effectiveness as a sales tool. She's making a new, lower cost line for sale there, starting with recycled tin earrings.

To help her achieve mental and physical balance, Berman teaches an exercise class six times a week, tends her Japanese gardens, and cooks gourmet meals. She is also reveling in the freedom that comes from sending two children off to college. For all her feminist attitudes, she played the major part in raising her son and daughter. She also worked in her studio throughout their childhood. "When my son was only three months old I announced I needed a bending brake," she recalled, forecasting her future career merging motherhood, metal, and message.

An assortment of tin boxes awaiting dissection, along one wall of Berman's studio.

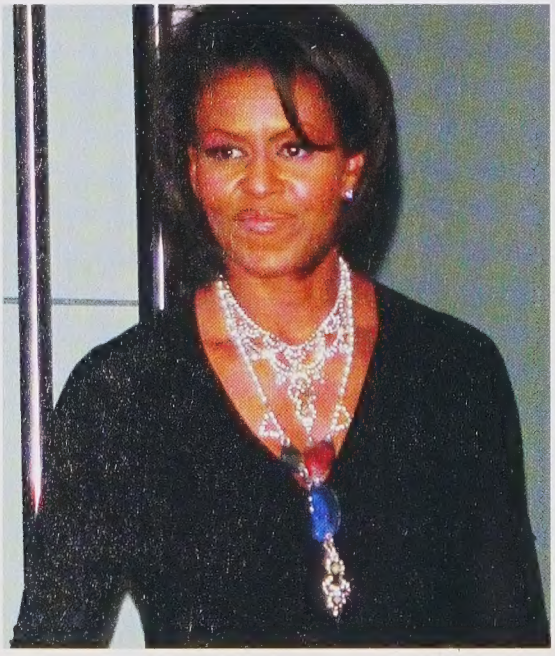
HARRIETE ESTEL BERMAN
"Williams Sonoma" bracelet, 2007
recycled tin cans, 10k gold rivets, Plexiglas
5 ½ x 4 ½ x 1"

Art Jewelry's Fashion Moment

The influence of art jewelry on fashion jewelry has never been stronger

BY ANDREA DINOTO

WHAT HAS THE rarefied—and increasingly conceptualized—world of art jewelry to do with the trend-driven parallel universe of fashion? While it may come as a surprise, there are indeed relationships, if not intersections, between the two realms. While the fashion world necessarily operates by the merciless rules of seasonal merchandising, producing fairly predictable, conservative styles overall, the fashion press has always championed the creativity of individual jewelry designers—and never so enthusiastically as now. The December 2007 issue of *Vogue* showcased the stunning '50s-era sculptural pieces of Art Smith (whose work is reviewed in this issue), and the magazine regularly accessorizes sittings with the jewelry of contemporary designers, such as Taher Chemirik, Herve van der Straeten, and Philip Crangi. At the same time, the gallery world is discovering how powerful marketing—via the very successful SOFA shows and promotional events—benefits artists, garnering the attention of a larger audience of fashion- and design-oriented consumers.



A Tom Binns necklace worn by Michelle Obama in June 2008
PHOTO: MARCEL THOMAS/ GETTY IMAGES

What's abundantly clear is that the influence of art jewelry on fashion jewelry has never been stronger; witness First Lady Michelle Obama at a 2008 Democratic fundraiser resplendent in a Tom Binns necklace, a cascading collage of vintage rhinestones in brilliant "diamond" and gemstone colors. The edgy Binns is fashion's current, if unlikely, darling. His high-low jewelry is everywhere, paired with couture in fashion magazines, available on the Internet, and widely emulated. Even a couture house like Lanvin is producing a patchwork "statement necklace" of costume and precious jewels. In the March 2008 issue of *Vogue*, contributing editor Plum Sykes suggested that "contemporary jewelry, modern in design, timeless in appeal" should, in these dicey economic times, be considered a smart investment. Among the names she cited were the Belfast-born Binns, but also American Daniel Brush, whose rarely glimpsed Bakelite brooches sell for five figures; the French jeweler Frederic Zaavy, renowned for exquisite pavé floral jewels; V. Bruce Hoeksema, under the brand VBH, a handbag designer who has added fine jewelry to his high-style offerings; and Victoire de Castellane, Dior's quirky house accessory designer, whose colorful cocktail rings feature semi-precious megastones in whimsically detailed settings. As this short list indicates, fashion jewelry has become a diverse field that embraces everything from a maverick artist-designed esthetic (Binns has been known to spray "jewels" with neon paint) to the classic designs of the great houses, Cartier, Bulgari, etc. Every category responds to the tyranny of design trends; even diamond and gem-set jewelry, an industry staple, now embraces uncut diamonds as the latest must-have. (Art jeweler Todd Reed actually started this "trend" 15 years ago, acquiring free cast-offs from the diamond industry to create a wildly successful collection of "natural" stones hand-set in gold.) Major diamond houses like Diamond in the Rough and De Beers today mine new riches in stones that would once have been rejected out of hand. Even at this high level, perceived value holds sway in the marketplace.

For a unique overview of the current fashion jewelry field, consider the JA (Jewelers of America) New York trade shows, an important buying venue for jewelry retailers (independents, chains, galleries), which draw hundreds of exhibitors from all over the world, and are open to the public. The JA New York Summer Show, held last July at the Javits Center, featured, as usual, special sections devoted to trend-watching, notably the self-explanatory New Designers Gallery, the Couture Pavilion, and the International Pavilions, where Italy commands attention for its gold traditions and designs. Antique and Estate Jewelry was also represented, and at the very rear of the vast exhibition hall the AGTA Colored Stone Pavilion lured show goers with seeming acres of candy-colored loose gems and beads, all there for the choosing, as if from an exotic bazaar. It's easy to get lost in the maze of aisles

Denise Betesh's hand wrought "Chain Series" from 2007, featuring 22k fused/granulated chains, with diamond accents and sage moonstone pendant.

and booths at a JA show, but certain young designers and established names always manage to assert themselves. Worth noting: Carolina Bucci's extraordinarily fine silk-and-gold mesh pieces, woven in Florence on a modernized textile loom; Emanuela Duca's sand-textured silver and gold ribbon rings that wrap the finger in a dramatic spiral; and the hand-wrought 22k gold link chains of Denise Betesh, a New Mexico artist, who describes her work as "a fusion technique out of granulation," and who does the show to increase her gallery representation. Among the couture jewelers, Oscar Heyman, the venerable firm founded in 1912, displayed their dazzling colored-stone jewelry, which they have produced over the years for major firms (the famed Taylor-Burton diamond necklace purchased at Cartier was theirs). A hazel cat's eye cabochon and diamond ring appeared to blink and beckon with seductive beauty and mystery, as if to sum up the timeless allure of jewelry itself. If you had to pick just one jewel for all time, pearls, such as the luminous Tahitian and South Sea variety of Assael International, so seductive in their gray-black-yellow-pink-white iridescence, would serve well. (Even the fictional fashionista Carrie Bradshaw donned an ever-present Mikimoto strand in the recent movie version of *Sex and the City.*)

Reporting on the show in National Jeweler Network, an online magazine, Catherine Dayrit described a "tale of two styles," in which the bolder necklaces and cuffs that were being promoted by style makers actually drew less interest among consumers than smaller, delicate jewelry that can be stacked and layered for impact. Also, "enlightenment jewelry" with religious, spiritual or zodiacal themes was strong, as were nature-inspired motifs and textured metals. Jewelers also report that the Internet has created a new generation of informed consumers who ask questions not only about the ethical aspects of jewelry on offer, the sources of diamonds and gold, for example, but also regarding fashion—what's in, what's out, presumably, how to wear the style of the moment.

The current big-bold style—dictating the massive necklace, the mega cuff, the huge hoops, and the three-mojito cocktail ring—was predicted for fall 2008. Which will be old news by the time this issue reaches the newsstand. So what, then, is the function of a jewelry trend, beyond marketing? Most usefully, and however outlandishly it may manifest itself, a trend reminds us that fashion, like art, is essentially the visual expression of an ethos, reflecting the prevalent, ever shifting, spirit of the day.

While the fashion world necessarily operates by the merciless rules of seasonal merchandising ... the fashion press has always championed the creativity of individual jewelry designers.

Andrea DiNoto, a New-York based writer on the arts and design, aspires to be fashionable.

Hibiscus Bracelet *by Frédéric Zaavy was featured in his 2007 solo exhibition at Phillips de Pury auction house in New York City.*

The Fat Booty of Madness: The Jewelry Department at the Academy of Fine Arts Munich

BY FLORIAN HUFNAGEL, MARIBEL KÖNIGER, AND OTTO KÜNZLI
ARNOLDSCHE ART PUBLISHERS, STUTTGART, 2008

BY URSULA ILSE-NEUMAN

THE FAT BOOTY OF MADNESS is an exuberant book, accompanying an exhibition of the same title devoted to cutting-edge contemporary art jewelry by 77 current and former students of renowned jeweler Otto Künzli in the Department of Jewelry and Holloware at the Munich Academy of Fine Arts. This is one book that can justifiably be judged by its cover: its graffiti-like black-and-white design is a perfect visualization of the title, suggesting that the unpredictable and often startling jewelry inside is the "fat booty" resulting from the madness that gives free rein to artistic creativity.

The book, like the jewelry it presents, is irreverent, profound, controversial, and consistently thought provoking and accomplished. The students' highly individualistic works reflect the philosophy and high standards of an unconventional jewelry program led by Otto Künzli, arguably today's most influential provocateur in this field.

The Munich Academy, which celebrated its bicentennial in 2008, merged with the School for Arts and Crafts and the Academy of Applied Arts in 1946, beneficially placing the "fine" arts, crafts, and applied arts under one roof. Franz Rickert (1904–91) had initiated the jewelry program at the Academy in 1935, directing it until 1972. Among his students was his successor Hermann Jünger (1928–2005), who directed the program from 1972 to 1990. Jünger encouraged individualism and experimentation, abolishing the anonymous character of the goldsmith and inspiring more than 90 students. Jünger was succeeded in 1991 by his student, Otto Künzli (b. 1948). These three far-sighted artists-educators have contributed invaluably to the Academy's reputation as one of the leading international centers for contemporary art jewelry.

Künzli's students have come from 17 countries to contribute elements of their culture, including five of them hailing from the United States: Mason Douglas, Rebecca Hannon, Mielle Harvey, Shari Pierce, and Karen Stool. The lively interaction of the students' diverse backgrounds is apparent in the book's 20 introductory pages, which feature photographic collages of teachers, students, and guests in classrooms, field trips, group portraits, and parties, often in costumes or prankish poses, from over the last 17 years. Resembling pages from a school yearbook, the photographs reveal the essence of the jewelry program: a balance between work and fun.

Presented with imagination and flair, *Fat Booty* devotes an ambitious 320 pages and more than 1,000 photographs to the jewelry, with a flexible grid used for the layout of each artist's images. Yet each section is highly personalized, with many artists choosing friends and fellow students as models for their work. The concept reflects the program's open-minded philosophy of encouraging each student to find his or her unique voice within a community of equals.

The works range from experimental and freewheeling to delicate and poetic. Some are radically new, others are rooted in age-old traditions—and the works of emerging student artists are shown alongside those of established stars. Amid the diversity of concepts and techniques, focus on the human body is paramount, a reflection of one of Otto Künzli's central theses: "We are proud to be applied artists in the sense that we see our strength in the specific link between objects and humans, a feature which is quite unique to jewelry."

One of the requirements for admission to Kunzli's program is a solid knowledge of metalworking, so that entering students can concentrate on developing as artists rather than technicians. Each student is free to find his or her own voice in an atmosphere that stresses discussion and experimentation, rather than metalworking skills.

Following the catalogue section, which is arranged alphabetically by artist, is a compendium of biographies (in German) for every one of the more than 300 students of the jewelry program at the Academy from 1935 to the present. Occupying three columns of compact text per page, the biographies contain a wealth of information, with the entry for Künzli covering more than four-and-a-half pages. Enormous credit must go to the compilers, though it is regrettable that the lack of line breaks or paragraph separation makes it exceedingly laborious to extract the valuable information hidden in plain sight. This is a minor

The book, like the jewelry it presents, is irreverent, profound, controversial, and consistently thought provoking and accomplished.

criticism of what is a boisterous celebration of the achievements of contemporary art jewelry as seen through the prism of Künzli's goldsmith class.

Following a foreword by the editor, Dr. Florian Hufnagel, director of the Pinakothek der Moderne in Munich, three essays focus on Künzli and the goldsmith program. The first, "A Class of Its Own," by Maribel Königer, is an appreciation of contemporary jewelry as conceived at the Academy. An insightful writer on Künzli's work, she describes the creative output of 14 ex-pupils who have gained considerable reputations.

In his own essay, "L'Academie, Je t'aime," Künzli presents fascinating insights into what makes his program unique, namely, time and the freedom to experiment; the postgraduate course can last up to five years, with no exams, no grades, and no annual competitions pitting one student against another. There is no hierarchy among students regardless of age or experience since Künzli, the antithesis of the intimidating master, argues that "art cannot be taught," nor does it follow the demands of the global marketplace. Remarkably, 89 percent of those who have graduated are now active as professional artists, 88.41 percent in jewelry and holloware. Only 35 percent of the current class is from Germany and 60 percent are women.

The last essay, "Construction Site Jewellery," by Ellen Maurer Zilloli, former curator at the Pinakothek der Moderne, places the jewelry class within the context of a historical continuum at the Munich Academy. Zilloli discusses the central role that critiquing plays in driving the students to stay attuned to the concerns of their time. Zilloli's descriptions of the group dynamics

of projects and events convey the sense of a three-ring circus that is gently kept under control by Künzli, who epitomizes in his own person the priorities he sets for his students: authenticity, individuality, independence, integrity, and passion.

The exhibition of more than 400 pieces at the Pinakothek der Moderne, curated by Künzli and his students, reflected the same unorthodox, high-risk approach taken in the production of the book. One of the most striking elements was the choice of borrowed display cabinets in a wild variety of furniture styles—including Victorian, Art Deco, Bauhaus, Post-modern and flea market—arranged with a deliberate randomness throughout the gallery. In typical Künzli style, the effect was disorienting at first, with a planned chaos that intended to keep visitors on their toes. Each display case had to be approached with fresh eyes and an expectation of the unexpected.

One thing missing, however, in this feast of a book (as well as in the exhibition) is works by Otto Künzli. This was no accidental omission, rather, it was the professor's intention to shine the light on his students and not on himself. Nevertheless, Künzli's presence is felt across the spectrum of the often brilliant, sometimes quirky, and always provocative works that make up the seemingly boundless *Fat Booty of Madness*. This publication will prove to be a valuable and fascinating resource for jewelry devotees, including curators, galleries and collectors, as well as an exhilarating roller-coaster adventure for those new to the field.

Ursula Ilse-Neuman is curator of jewelry at the Museum of Arts & Design in New York.

Tom Joyce: Broadband Virtuoso

This conceptual blacksmith shapes incandescent metal within the contours of his thought

BY MALIN WILSON-POWELL

"THE DIRT ON my hands feels good," says Tom Joyce, as he smiles at the grime embedded in the whorls of his fingertips.[1] Looking at the ingrained soot of smithing, this articulate, soft-spoken, athletic man notes that it takes at least a month of forge work before he can *not* wash the residue away. Since being awarded a five-year MacArthur Fellowship in 2003, Joyce has come to cherish blacksmithing time in his Santa Fe studio: the roar of flames, the hammer blows on glowing metal, the volcano of steam as the white-hot steel slices into water. Even as hands-on workshop sessions become more infrequent, the exacting labor of creating pieces from incandescent metal in this place remains at the core of an expanding spiral of Joyce's endeavors.

As this article is written, the artist is juggling multitudes of projects. For Joyce, none of these activities are separate or prioritized. His lifelong practice has been to engage every task at hand with full and open attention. "Each [activity] fuels and feeds a reciprocal investigation in [my] life." says Joyce. "Without one of the parts, the others would be less... communication between these sometimes disparate parts is critical."[2] Joyce is wholly present whether handling hot metal, baking bread, or teaching a child. His current commitments include the installation of permanent outdoor sculptural seating at the new Museum of Art and Design on Columbus Circle in New York City; a suite of lithographs for Landfall Press; co-curating a major traveling museum exhibition of African forged iron and copper alloy

objects; completing the spring session of an ongoing free blacksmithing program for young people in his studio; following up on his March visit to Ghana and Togo, where he met Ewe, Ga, Ashanti, and Fon blacksmiths; working with an archaeologist on evidence of iron bloom that pushes back the dates of Togo's oldest smelting site; hosting studio visits for groups that range from Art Institute of Chicago to students from the Institute of American Indian Arts in Santa Fe; communicating with sponsors for fall teaching residencies in Belgium and Estonia; editing the 125-page rough draft of a Smithsonian Archives of American Art interview; serving as a weekend guide for New Mexico paleontologist Larry Rinehart to view a rare fossilized Ectoganus jawbone he discovered while camping along an escarpment; and replanting the family garden—yet a third time—after a thorough plundering of seeds, seedlings, and worms by the curved bill thrasher, an invasive species new to the high desert of northern New Mexico. In addition to this very full life, since April Joyce has been driving the 120-mile roundtrip from Santa Fe to Albuquerque at least twice a week to work with his four new founding partners in Noribachi, a startup company dedicated to solar power innovations. Joining the Noribachi team as lead designer, Joyce has since been appointed CEO (or Chief Experience Officer).

Joyce is by habit an early riser, and for years has cultivated a contemplative quietude in the still hours when potent darkness drains away to light. An autodidact, Joyce's predawn book list over the years reflects a broad, inquiring, and supple mind. "At present, I'm fully immersed in books on sustainability issues, business ethics, and the latest in solar technology—Bill McDonough's *Cradle to Cradle*, Paul Hawken's *Natural Capitalism*, and *Harvard's Business Review on Green Business Strategies*, to name but a few. I'm happy to supply additional titles, if you'd like, but I haven't read a book purely for pleasure since *Dirt, The Ecstatic Skin of the Earth*, by William Bryant Logan in 2007."[3] Even during the 1990s, when Joyce's workshop, equipped with four coal and one gas forge, was fully staffed with assistants producing architectural ironwork, and when the environment was bellowing with fire and filled with the rhythm of hammers and the staccato of air hammer strikes, it was a four-day-a-week operation, for everyone. The forges were cold on Fridays, the day Joyce then set aside for experimentation and reading, both for himself and the benefit of his assistants. Since beginning to blacksmith, he has shaped metal within the contours of his ideas: "I've always been interested in a conceptual approach to design."[4]

Memorial Sculpture, 2002
cast iron, ash (World Trade Center site), soil (Santuario de Chimayo), sand (Tibetan Buddhist mandala)
left 6 x 6 x 6"
right 8 x 8 x 8"
PHOTO: JOHN MICHAEL KOHLER ART/INDUSTRY RESIDENCY PROGRAM
COLLECTION OF NATIONAL ORNAMENTAL METAL MUSEUM

It would have been impossible to foresee a path from the tiny dirt-floor El Rito forge to a life lived so widely across the globe and occupied with so many contemporary concerns.

As the MacArthur Foundation fellowship comes to an end this year, their no-strings-attached funding has increased Joyce's appetite for inquiry, innovation, and action. Although he never did manage the five-month sojourn to Africa he originally planned, during his spring 2008 visit to that continent, he cultivated new connections and renewed longstanding ones. Most significantly, in his work with metal, the MacArthur support meant Joyce successfully explored a dramatic scaling up of his sculpture and challenged himself to find ways of using his expertise within the environment of a large industrial forge.

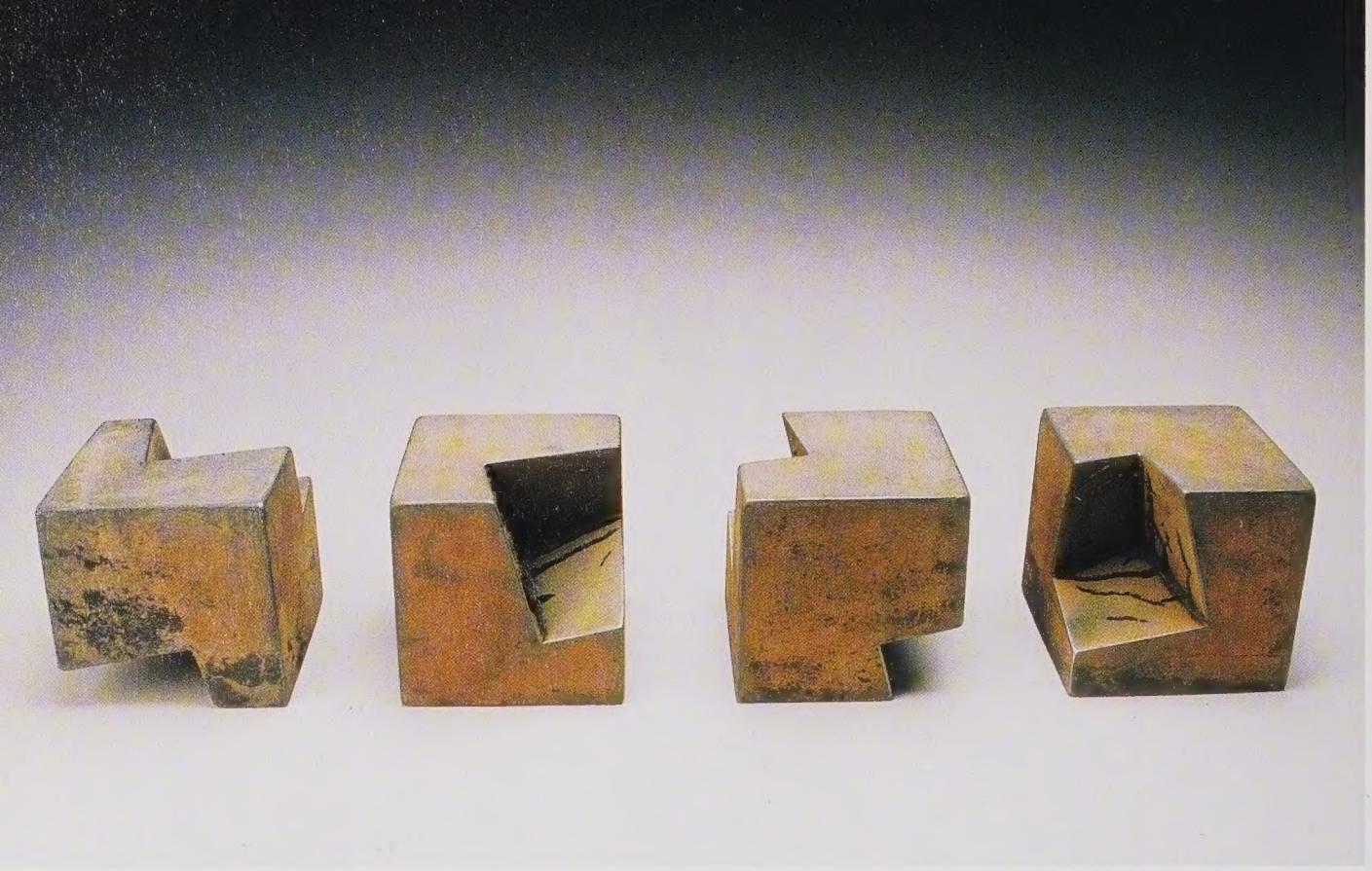
At 51 years of age, Tom Joyce has been practicing the craft of blacksmithing for 37. In the early 1970s, no responsible American middle-class adult would have advised a 4.0 student to leave high school at 16 years old—as Joyce did—to become a blacksmith, fixing and forging farmer's tools in a remote northern New Mexico village. His great aunt Mary, with whom he lived during the school year in Oklahoma, cried. Forward-looking people then were absolutely convinced all trends in culture and technology were moving inexorably toward dematerialization, digitization, and miniaturization. It would have been impossible to foresee a path from the tiny dirt-floor El Rito forge to a life lived so widely across the globe and occupied with so many contemporary concerns. Joyce's life seamlessly incorporates sensuous monumental steel sculpture, in-depth scholarship on African metalworking, and the exciting prospect of setting up an inventors' workshop for Noribachi.

It is a lovely paradox that Joyce's mastery of blacksmithing in the 1970s—at a time when the craft was disregarded as irrelevant—should now reveal itself a treasure chest of useful skills. When he became fascinated with

Fibonacci Bowl, 1989/2007
forged iron
4 x 15 x 15"
COLLECTION OF
ARKANSAS ART CENTER

blacksmithing, there was not one apprenticeship program available in the U.S. like the eight-year programs offered in Europe. This need for Joyce to find his own way was fortuitous, considering how firmly the European tradition of blacksmithing is circumscribed within the parameters of the building trades. For Joyce, to learn the craft and develop it into an art meant a good deal of self-reliance, bravura, and plenty of trial and error. Situated out of the mainstream, in the third poorest state in the union, Joyce was free to develop his own ideas and means. He began by examining in detail Spanish Colonial hardware in New Mexico museums and private collections, and eventually by becoming a knowledgeable collector of African iron implements and currency. To date, he has assembled collections of African metalwork for four museums.[5] In addition to his initial in-depth studies and replication of historic pieces, Joyce avidly sought out those few passionate master blacksmiths who had literally kept the flame alive. The subsequent burgeoning of blacksmithing and metalworking is a well-known story to the readers of *Metalsmith*, itself an outgrowth of the revival and extraordinary creativity in the field.

In 1993, when Joyce was 36, Francis Whittaker (1906–99) then America's eminence grise of artists-blacksmiths, acknowledged Joyce as simply the best blacksmith in America: "I'm jealous; he's so young and yet so very good."[6] Grateful and humbled by such kudos, the carpe diem nature of Joyce's homage to his elders and traditional smiths has always been to move forward, to take up formerly unavailable technologies, and to fully interrogate



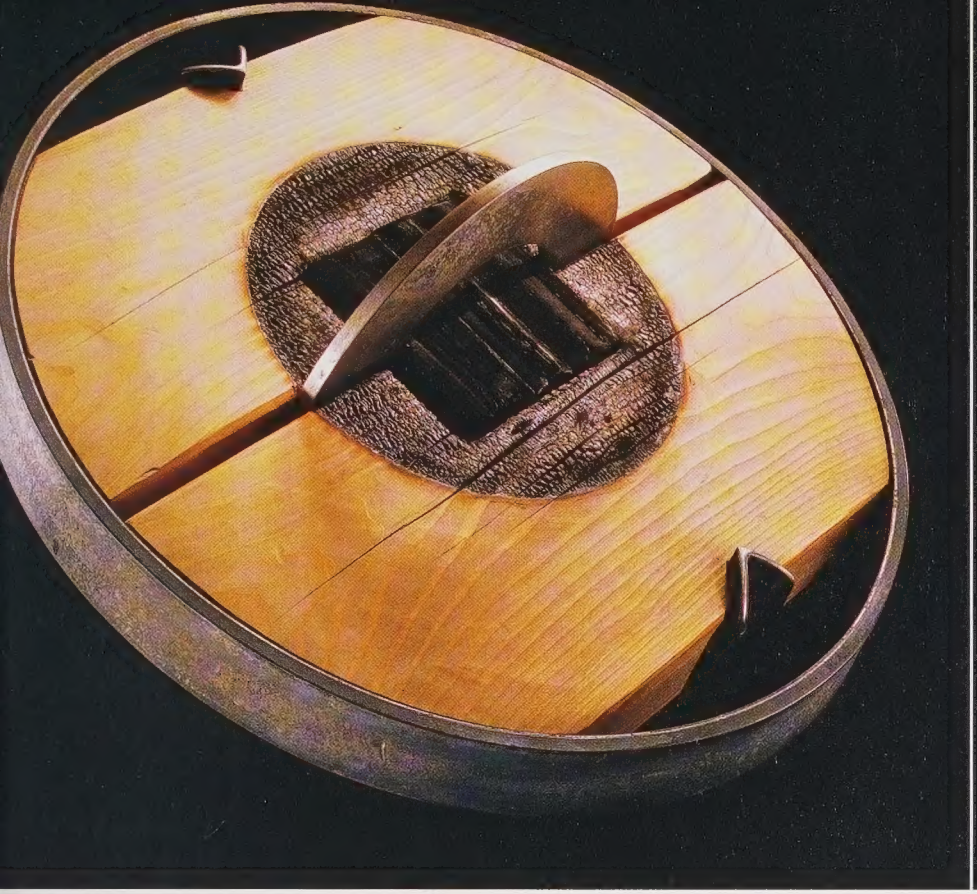
Northeast by Southwest, 2003
cast iron
6 x 33 x 6"
PHOTO: JOHN MICHAEL KOHLER ART/
INDUSTRY RESIDENCY PROGRAM
COLLECTION OF NAN AND DAVID RAY

accepted doctrines. With Joyce's capable hands and open mind (he's procured donated nuclear warhead cones from the U.S. Department of Energy, and Russian bomb parts from Arzimas 16, the former USSR Cold War secret city, for a projected peace lectern), he welcomed the opportunity in 2001 to investigate cast metal while in a residency at the Kohler Art/Industry Program, even though molds are considered a sacrilege to traditional blacksmiths. The result was an edition of memorial sculptures poured on the first anniversary of the September 11 disasters, in 2002. Mixed into the metal is ash from the World Trade Center, dirt from Santuario de Chimayo (a sacred healing site in New Mexico), and sand from a mandala made by Tibetan Buddhist monks. Some of his other collaborations include working with composer-acoustic ecologist Steve Feld, who uses field recordings to document African gong maker-musicians; creating billows of rolling smoke for video artist Steina Vasulka; and his unbilled production of scores of sinuous iron sunflower leaves for a Kiki Smith installation.

Many of the qualities necessary for Joyce's current endeavors are hidden in plain sight in his personal history. The artist, his family, and friends built his commodious 2,200-square-foot adobe studio in 1987, before they built their home. It was literally built out of their own backyard. Beautifully nestled into a soft rise of land, among the most salient and subtle qualities of these mud-brick buildings is their skin; they are plastered with the same dirt as is underfoot. Almost no adobes are plastered with mud anymore, unless they are the buildings of the poor; mud plaster is considered too high-maintenance in the first world, but it is the only way that such buildings can breathe. It's a lifelong commitment. The buildings expand and contract with the passage of day and night, the changes of weather, the seasons, and the level of activity within.

Underlying all of Joyce's activities is a commitment to such baseline vitality, whether it is in a building, a bowl, a pot of soup, or a sentence. Whatever he makes feels inexplicably, miraculously alive. His works of iron and steel seem to breathe. While most ironwork is dense, hard, immovable, linear, and often with sharp edges, even Joyce's earliest hinges, handles, and railings pulse with a robust fluidity. They embody the ease and inevitability of inhalations and exhalations. Formally, Joyce often realizes this palpable liquid resonance by using designs of spiraling movement and by subtle beveling and delicate surface modulations that temper the light. His justifiably celebrated Art Deco–inspired entrance gates for the Sol y Sombra estate in Santa Fe suggest rain softly falling. In the high desert of New Mexico there is no blessing like rain.

In the early 1990s, Joyce accepted ambitious commissions, including the magnificent Santa Maria De La Paz baptismal font in Santa Fe, and the ebullient blossom of a mica chandelier for the Phoenix Museum of History.



Quoin, 1994
wood, books, forged iron
48 x 48 x 41"
PHOTO: NICK MERRICK
COLLECTION OF SARA AND DAVID LIEBERMAN

Wedge, 1994
books, forged iron
34 x 8 ½ x 4 ½"
PHOTO: NICK MERRICK
COLLECTION OF BARRY LOPEZ

Alongside these big projects, he used similar vocabularies for tabletop-scale pieces. His mother was an accomplished quilter, and the baptismal font, using ferrous mementoes contributed by parishioners, is an elegant legacy of putting together fragments to create a whole that is more than the sum of its parts. The constructions of Joyce's metal sculpture honor not only the polyphonic chorus of individual voices, but also the layered histories of the material itself. "There is no 'virgin' iron left in the world; it has all seen another life," he says.[7] With his artful recycling of the chains, keys, locks, hinges, license plates, and other rusty sundries contributed by members of the church's congregation, Joyce's patchwork piecing not only preserves differences of color, tone, weight, and density, but the unique self-selected assembly of this specific community of worshippers.

In all of his work, Joyce creates a very wide aperture of inspirations and interpretations. Describing one of his early inlaid bowls, he "conceived it as a result of seeing aerial views of patterned farmland being encroached by urban sprawl.... The center is made from iron I found as teenager."[8] No matter how complicated or technically difficult Joyce's work may be in execution, the finished pieces are always forthright, displaying an overriding simplicity, a notable restraint, and a relevant rightness in their composition. Like the man, the work speaks with layers of heartfelt meaning, but without fuss.

In 2008 Joyce was commissioned to forge a folded bowl for the MacArthur Award for International Justice, which was presented to former secretary-general of the United Nations Kofi Annan. This special bowl, folded seven times from a length of hot iron based on average human height worldwide, harkens back to the artist's 1993 folded series of bowls inspired by Fibonacci mathematical sequences. The folded and inlaid bowls of 1993 are series that attracted the attention of the art world, in Joyce's first solo show at Barbara Okun's art gallery in Santa Fe.

In 1995, also for the Okun Gallery, Joyce exhibited another new body of conceptually based art for which he coined the term "Pyrophyte," a series using huge timbers, singed books, and scorched balls of newspapers. Adjacent to his first forge in El Rito "was a letterpress printing shop specializing in handset type and design," recalls Joyce. "I helped out in summers in both places and found in each activity powerful sources of instruction.... The study of fire and the history of iron and the influence of the printed word.... These forces and

No matter how complicated or technically difficult Joyce's work may be in execution, the finished pieces are always forthright, displaying an overriding simplicity, a notable restraint, and a relevant rightness in their composition.

Bloom III, 2005
forged iron
28 x 30 x 30
COLLECTION OF ROBYN AN JOHN HORN

technologies exert a decisive effect on cultures worldwide, and in a multitude of ways provide me with inexhaustible avenues of thought."[9] Today, pieces from all these series casually adorn his studio.

In 2005 Joyce's studio sprouted a new wing: an outdoor covered area for finishing the large-scale sculpture forged during two exploratory sessions at an industrial facility. During two-and-a-half months in the spring of that year, fortified by MacArthur support, Joyce developed a working relationship with a team of highly trained industrial blacksmiths at the Scot Forge near Chicago. The leftovers at Scot Forge are massive and measured in tons; each month this single industrial manufacturer forges approximately 250 million pounds of iron, copper, and aluminum alloy. The first body of sculptures and drawings crafted on this immense machinery and titled "Sotto Voce" was exhibited in August 2005. While the sculptures are obviously heavy metal, many of them confound with their buoyancy and animation. How is it that they seem to billow, even fluff out like a birds' down?

The pieces called "Bloom" actually look as if they are growing. Metalsmiths know that in smelting terminology, a bloom is the raw sponge-like mass of ferrous metal before it is shaped into bars or plates. Joyce explains that his large-scale "Bloom" sculptures are made from massive ingots that "were turned inside out by forging and folding, so that their original skin is now hidden inside its folds and fresh material is kneaded toward the outside."[10]

For their opening in fall 2008, the new Museum of Arts and Design in New York City commissioned seven "Two to One" benches, a variation on the first "Sotto Voce" sculptures for seating. These pieces were created from cubes of stainless steel during a spring 2008 session at Scot Forge. Heated to 2,400 degrees, the cubes are blind-riveted just off center from one another before they are squeezed beneath a huge 3,000-ton hydraulic press. The askew placement allows a sliding action that creates dynamic, seemingly soft pairs of cubes. Joyce finishes them in his Arroyo Hondo open-air studio with a charcoal-gray, iron oxide patina. The seven sculptural seats range from 15 to 33 inches in height, weighing from 577 to 9,984 pounds, and they will be installed beneath the trees on the north side of the museum entrance. They create a perfect place for all the cosmopolitan joys of resting in a setting as public and active as Columbus Circle. These understated pieces reverberate with many meanings in their own doubling of cubes and the multiplier of seven, suggesting myriad human interactions of waiting, meeting, conversing, watching, sitting together and apart.

While working with the red-hot stainless steel cubes to fabricate the "Two to One" benches, Joyce found the slightest scratch would fray them like splintered wood. He is thrilled by the discovery and looking forward to exploring this tendency on his next visit to Scot Forge.

Cairn is an ongoing piece, begun during Joyce's first session at Scot Forge, which speaks directly to the

Two to One, I and IV (benches), 2005
forged iron
left 15 ½ x 20 ½ x 19 ½"
right 19 ½ x 24 ½ x 23 ½"
PHOTO: ROBERT RECK
COLLECTION OF ALICIA AND BILL MILLER

Stacked, 2006–2007
forged iron
74 x 34 x 32"
(5507 lbs)
COLLECTION OF LOUISA SAROFIM

Penumbra I, 2005
charred impression on wood
48 x 48 x 3"
COLLECTION OF DOTTIE AND DICK BARRETT

heartache many skilled blacksmiths have felt when they were required to turn plowshares into swords. *Cairn* is a movable pile of "boulders" made from salvaged industrial scrap, and each faceted lump will eventually contain soil from battlefields around the world with a small plaque to identify the particulars of the battle. *Cairn* is Joyce's symbol for conflict resolution, an ever-changing response to the lethal qualities of metal forged for stabbing, piercing, bashing, and smashing.

Joyce also began working more seriously with two-dimensional images in the manufacturing atmosphere of the forge. At first, he simply wanted to record the immense scale of pieces made by the company and took the opportunity to press freshly forged, still red-hot industrial machine parts onto recycled wood-fiber panels. Intrigued by the final objects, he continues to pursue the burnt drawings. He finds them mysterious and isn't quite sure where they will lead. Joyce is currently working weekly at the venerable Landfall Press (which relocated to Santa Fe in 2004) toward a suite of ten lithographs that uses the fire-branding technique initiated at Scot, along with forge soot collected from his own workshop, and rust gathered from fort cannonballs at Cape Coast Castle in Ghana.

Joyce's studio is a place that feels charged; the hair rises on the back of the neck. Eyes must adjust to a low light level, the better to see nuances in the colors of hot ferrous metal. A thousand hand tools line the walls, with approximately half forged by Joyce and his assistants; almost each project completed here necessitates custom tongs, fullers, punches, swages, chisels, flatters and set tools. Tool making is where Joyce starts with the apprentices in his free blacksmith program: they make the tools they need. How many of us can make the tools we need? What does that sense of competence and confidence feel like in a world where screen time mesmerizes most of us, especially our children, each day? Joyce's students learn to synchronize their breathing to make their first hammer; they must assist each other by striking while the hot iron is held securely. They feel the heat and know there are real consequences and dangers. A hot metal shard can maim or severely injure.

Tom Joyce is the still point, the center of gravity in an increasing swirl of activities. The obdurate tetany of cooled metal is a characterization employed and exploited since working metal began, while Joyce's uses of metal as a fluid circulatory system in both material and cultural terms shifts our understanding and adds much to the field of metalsmithing. His approach eliminates historical limitations and simply makes an end run around many traditional constraints.

The great acting teacher Stella Adler used to speculate with her students that humans become actors because they do not get to use enough of themselves in daily life. In the theater of our times, Tom Joyce uses himself more fully than most of us. He acts from largesse rather than tribalism, diminishing the importance of such inherited hierarchies between crafts versus art and hands-on makers versus intellectuals. His balancing act and trajectory percolate with curiosity, patience, and bubbles of inspiration. His orientation to living life spread widely across a broadband of interests engages those of us fascinated by human innovation and the results of beckoning new possibilities.

MaLin Wilson-Powell is an independent writer and curator living in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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1 Conversation with author, May 30, 2008.
2 Smithsonian Archives of American Art, interview with Tom Joyce conducted by Jan Yager, November 18–19, 2004.
3 Conversation with author, May 30, 2008.
3 Tom Joyce email to author, June 16, 2008.
4 *Craft in America: Episode I*, "Memory," PBS documentary, 2007.
5 National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian, 41 object types; Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe, 66 object types; Indiana University Art Museum, Bloomington, 119 object types; and, Seattle Art Museum, 138 object types.
6 Alexander, Tom, "The anvil chorus is ringing loud and clear," *Smithsonian*, 24:2 (May 1993): page 54.
7 Artist's notes from press release for "Sotto Voce: Tom Joyce," Evo Gallery exhibition, August 10–September 13, 2005.
8 Artist's quotes from press release Tom Joyce: New Iron Vessels, Okun Gallery exhibition, July 16–August 11, 1993.
9 Artist's quotes from press release "Pyrophyte, New Sculpture, Tom Joyce," Okun Gallery exhibition, July 14–August 7, 1995.
10 Artist's quotes from press release "Sotto Voce: Tom Joyce," Evo Gallery exhibition, August 10–September 13, 2005.

Tom Joyce heating Berg V with acetylene torch while twisting, 2006
PHOTO: NIGEL NOBLE

Berg XV, 2006/2008
forged iron
35 x 51 x 35 ½" (6683 lbs)
COLLECTION OF JOANN AND STEVE RUPPERT

Metalsmiths Against War

Protesting unpopular wars has taken many forms, including a range of work by contemporary metalsmiths

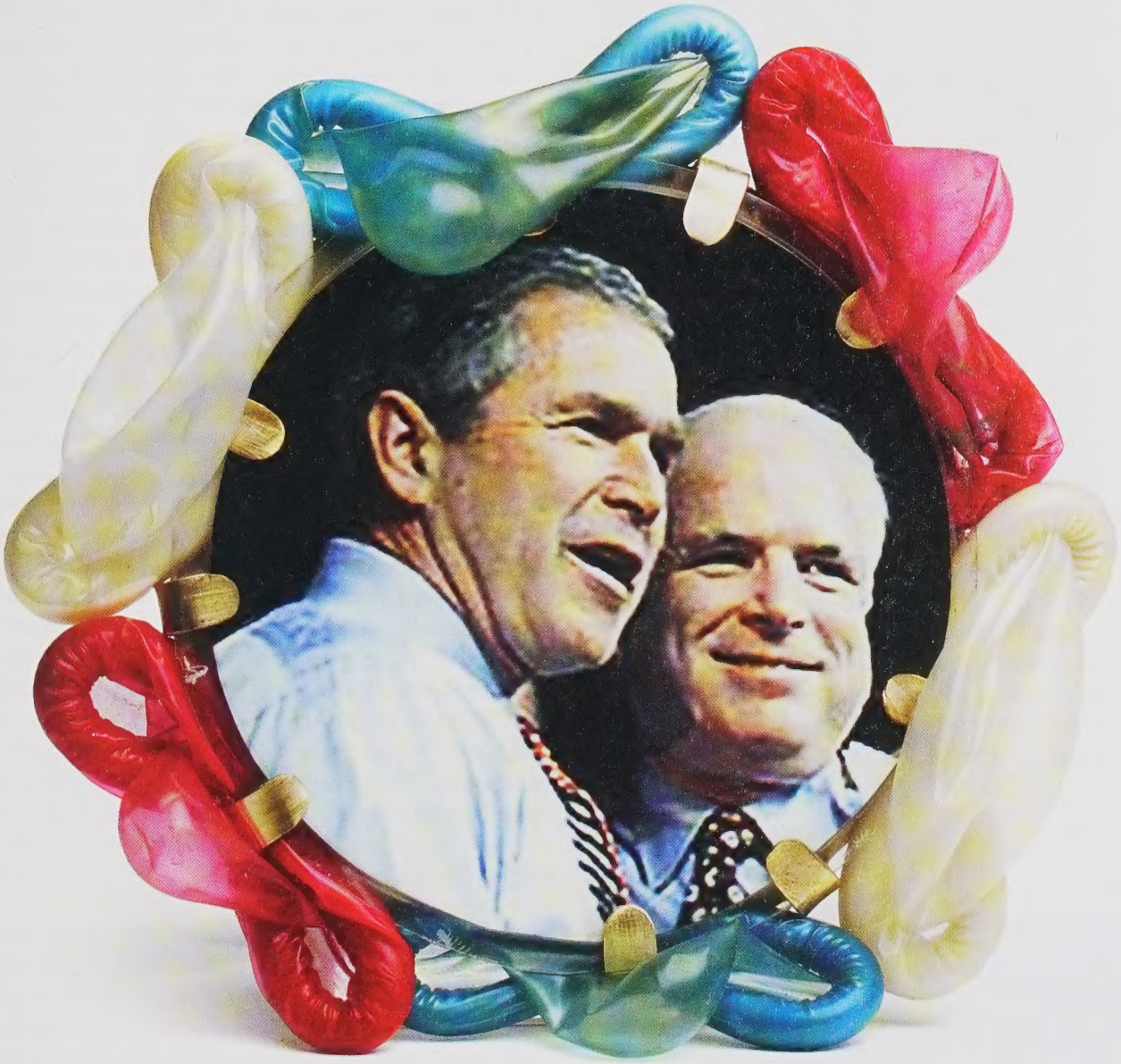
BY MARJORIE SIMON

LYSISTRATA, THE EPONYMOUS heroine of the Greek dramatist Aristophanes's comic play of 411 BCE, had a plan to end the 20-year Peloponnesian War: she called on the women of Athens, Sparta, Boeotia, and Corinth to withhold sex from their husbands until peace was secured. Aristophanes didn't say whether the women also pinned anti-war badges on their chitons, but they triumphed in their mission. Since then, protesting unpopular wars has taken many forms, including, it seems, contemporary metalsmithing.

Each generation, or maybe each conflict, seems to generate its own manner of protest. Following the unprecedented destruction of World War I, the European artistic movements of Dada and Surrealism, abetted by the new medium of film, emerged as responses to a world gone mad with war. If World War I had Dada, then Vietnam had music. With its roots in the social conscience of Woody Guthrie and the "race music" of rock and roll, the music of the 1960s and '70s functioned as a sort of generational badge to reinforce in-group solidarity and differentiate its adherents (draft-age youth) from outsiders (their parents). Signs of opposition to the war broadcasted from buttons, bumper stickers and badges, clothing, and of course, hair. At that time, jewelry was modernist and overt social content was rare. The peace sign made a convenient signifier, but a boring brooch.

Once the "personal became political," as the feminists put it, the body could become the theater of protest too.

Once the "personal became political," as the feminists put it, the body could become the theater of protest too. Naturally, jewelry doesn't have the power



BIBA SCHUTZ
Come Again, 2008
bronze, digital print, lamination, condoms, steel
4 x 4 x ½"
PHOTO: RON BOSZKO

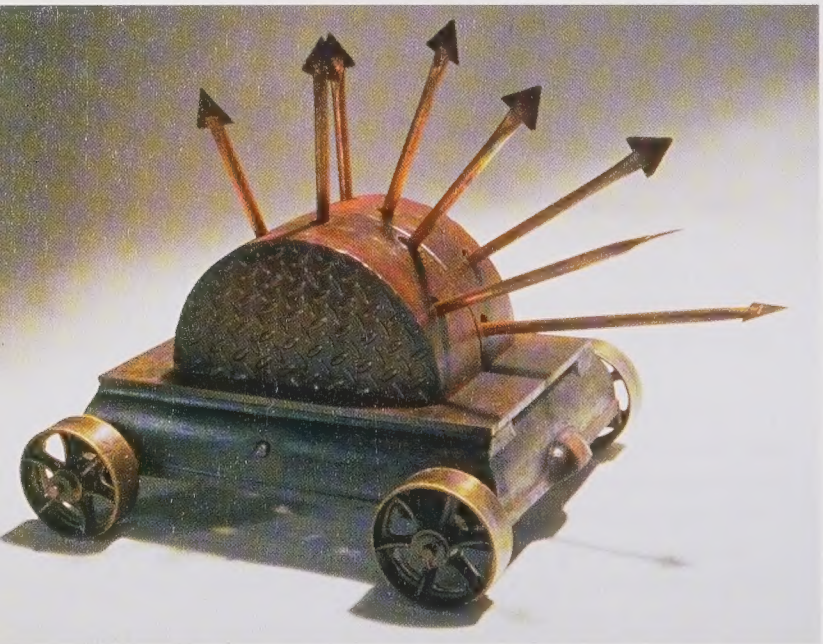
to affect public debate the way music does. But during the 1970s, a young J. Fred Woell was fine-tuning his responses to the post-Cold War military industrial complex and the troop buildup in Vietnam. Woell made jewelry with more content than a simple peace sign. He has been unceasing in his support of social justice, and for several decades has used jewelry and sculpture to skewer capitalist greed and government perfidy. His iconic and much published brooch *The Pepsi Generation* paired the advertising slogan with bullet casings.

Badges of all sorts remain popular forms of visual communication; they're a shorthand way to show affiliation and to differentiate members from non-members. They can designate law enforcement (shield), personal achievement (scouting merit badges), war experience (Purple Heart, officers' stars and bars), political affiliation (campaign buttons), or any group that sets itself apart from others.[1] Used metaphorically, *badge* can mean a sign of membership, as in the Stephen Crane novel *The Red Badge of Courage*, or a scar as a "badge of honor." The military, like many hierarchical organizations, uses badges to communicate status, rank, identity, and experience. Being so readily identifiable, they also invite appropriation, parody, and imitation. Military medals of honor are easy to satirize as "medals of dishonor," and some metalsmiths have taken the challenges offered by a couple of recent exhibitions to do just that.

Probably the first artist to create blatantly anti-war medallions was sculptor David Smith. In the 1930s Smith was traveling around Europe, about the time Germany was beginning to consolidate and extend its power. According to Holland Cotter, Smith modeled his 15 "Medals for Dishonor" on "World War I French and German propaganda medals...[updated] to reflect more recent examples of germ warfare and genocide."[2] Less than a foot in diameter, they are small for sculpture, almost intimate. Based on Sumerian cylinder seals Smith saw in Greece, in which images carved into the cylinder appear in relief on wet clay, the medallions targeted racism, injustice, and violence, and not just in war. Smith seems to have shown remarkable prescience today in the medallions titled "War Exempt Sons of the Rich."

The irony of using military-style medals to subvert their meaning proved to be a popular incentive.

BELLA FELDMAN
Tank with Arrows, 1992
steel, copper, cast iron
22 x 20 ½ x 25"



Since the close of World War II, American military involvement in the world has become more morally ambiguous. In 1992, California sculptor Bella Feldman responded unequivocally to the first Gulf War with *Tank with Arrows*. Her steel and glass "War Toys" series played with scale, contrasting the permanence of steel and the fragility of glass in absurd and futuristic machines. You have to get down on the floor to appreciate these alienist objects in action. They could be weapons, but they're more ironic; they suggest the futility of war, certainly of this war, and maybe all wars. They're threatening and preposterous, like laughing in the midst of tears and fears. Feldman revisited this theme in 2003 with "War Toys Redux"; unlike some sequels, these objects are tighter, cleaner, darker, starker, and angrier. A lifelong progressive, Bella Feldman is fed up.

As a collector of war medals, Mike Holmes, a metalsmith and co-owner with Elizabeth Shyppert of Velvet da Vinci Gallery in San Francisco, was aware of David Smith's work. Outraged at President Bush's "Mission Accomplished" premature "victory" speech in Iraq, Velvet da Vinci put out an international call for entries in 2003, eventually engaging 135 metal artists to respond with their own "medals of dishonor."[3] A few themes emerged in the gallery's curated exhibition, titled "Anti-War Medals": general protest at the wholesale devastation of war, and specific to this war, the issue of oil, and the mendacity of the U.S. government in justifying the invasion and the shameful action of the United States.

Before this exhibition, metalsmiths' responses to the invasion of Iraq had varied. It seemed few had expressed opposition through their work, although there had been a curious, under-the-radar response to the attacks of September 11, 2001. After a time, not a few jewelers found themselves making black mourning jewelry. Longing for beauty and healing took the form of referencing Victorian floral designs in silver, steel, or enamel, as in the work of Karen Gilbert. However, this was an individual, not a collective, reaction.

Most of this exhibition, and in a similar exhibition of anti-war medals curated by Elizabeth Turrell titled "The Enamel Experience," took literally the invitation to create "medals." The irony of using military-style medals to subvert their meaning proved to be a popular incentive. Using the conventional medal format of a grosgrain ribbon with metal pendant, several artists pointedly referred

KRISTIN MITSU SHIGA
No Blood for Oil, 2003
sterling, silk, enamel
3 ½ x 1 x 1"
PHOTO: DAN KVITKA

NICOLAS ESTRADA
Enough, 2003
sterling silver, glass, silk ribbon
3 ¼ x 1 ¼ x ¼"

WILLIAM CLARK
Operation Enduring Fiefdom, 2003
sterling silver, silk ribbon
2 x 4 x ⅜"
COLLECTION OF THE BRITISH MUSEUM

Christina Miller 2003
A dishonorable medal awarded to the American poop for believing the White House and to the President for lying.
These images speak to the unfalterin argument for
PEACE

CHRISTINA MILLER
An Unfaltering Argument for Peace, 2003
fabric, ink jet iron-on
image transfers, plastic zippers
folded 16 x 15 x 4"
unfolded 30 x 70"

to a major theme of the Iraq war: America's oil interests in the Middle East.

At Velvet da Vinci, Kristin Mitsu Shiga, and Nicolas Estrada also addressed this issue directly. Shiga makes thoughtful narrative jewelry that she describes as "wearable haiku," as a nod both to her Japanese heritage and the elegant shorthand of the poetic form. Her medal *No Blood for Oil* contrasts somber grey with a bright red drop of enamel blood pending from the nozzle of an oilcan, as if the Tin Man lived in a war zone. Estrada was born in Colombia, studied in the U.S., and now lives and works in Spain. He enlists imagery of guns and rosaries to highlight the nexus of religion and war, violence and hypocrisy. In the artist's words, his medal *Enough* is "a criticism to human insolence and immorality with its unlimited capacity to excuse faults." It is tempting to read into this bitter commentary a reflection of Spain's history of religious oppression.

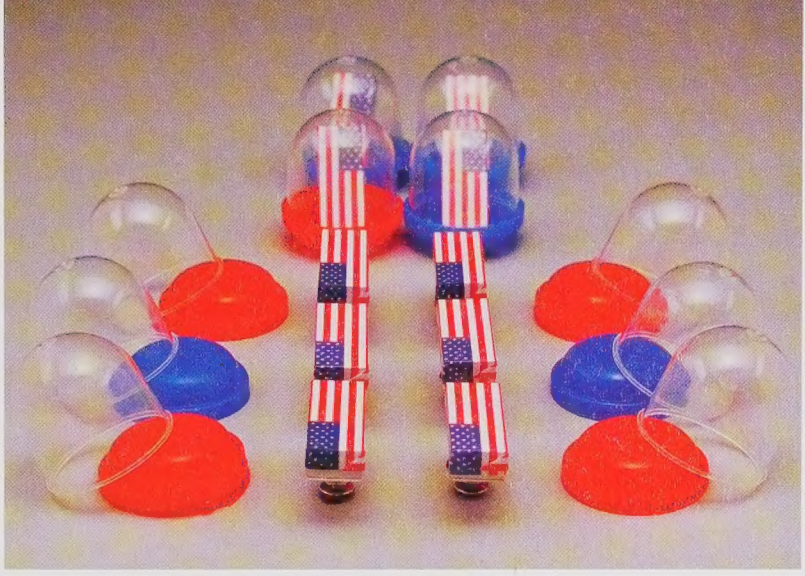
West Coast artist William Clark created wild and wildly engaged work during the 1970s. He reprised his *Police State* sheriff's badge of that era, as well as creating a new medal in the classic medal-of-honor mode with the engraved phrase "Operation Enduring Fiefdom," a mordant riff on "Operation Enduring Freedom." The medal's pendant is the cracked Liberty Bell.

American Sean Scully "manufactured flag-draped transport coffins (that have been hidden from the public) at 1/76th the size in the form of tie tacks or lapel pins." He has located a "7 foot gumball machine in the shape of an antique gas pump" to dispense these pins, and plans to match the count of American war dead in his production line. Scully, who spent his early years in a military family, equates interchangeable and disposable trinkets with the "disposable" young men and women who are the casualties of this war. Even so, when Scully talks about the 4,000 war dead, he means Americans (though he doesn't say so), and does not count the many thousands of Iraqis killed.

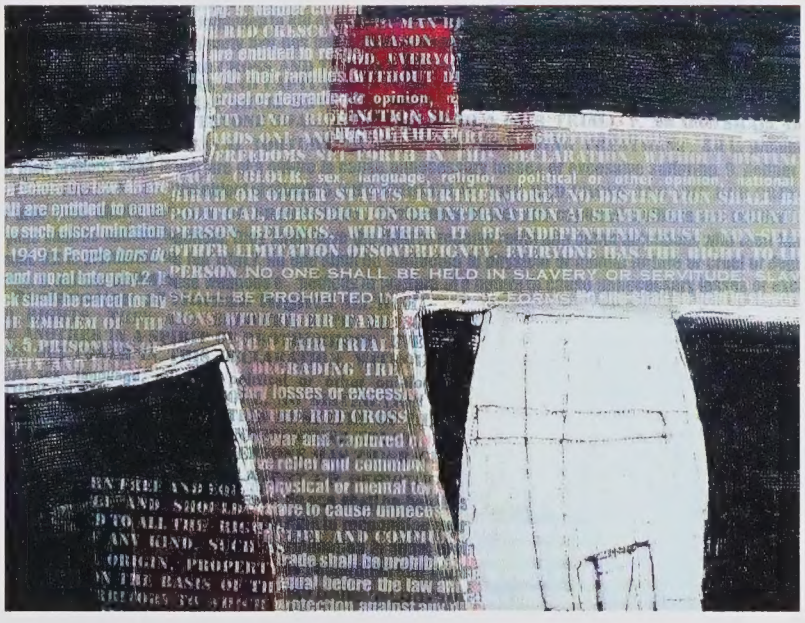
Christina Miller's fabric shroud takes the measure of all war's victims, in a silent plea for an end to war and a memorial to the fallen. *An Unfaltering Argument for Peace* is folded into a regulation triangle reserved for folding the American flag on the coffin of a fallen serviceman. Covered with pictures of young victims that Miller found on the Internet, and then transferred with iron-on paper, the shroud mourns a lost generation.

Scully, who spent his early years in a military family, equates interchangeable and disposable trinkets with the "disposable" young men and women who are the casualties of this war.

For her part, British metal artist and curator Elizabeth Turrell invited a group of 23 international enamellists to respond to the famed collection of badges at the Museum of Work *(Museum der Arbeit)* in Hamburg, Germany, for a traveling exhibition. Combining the tangled



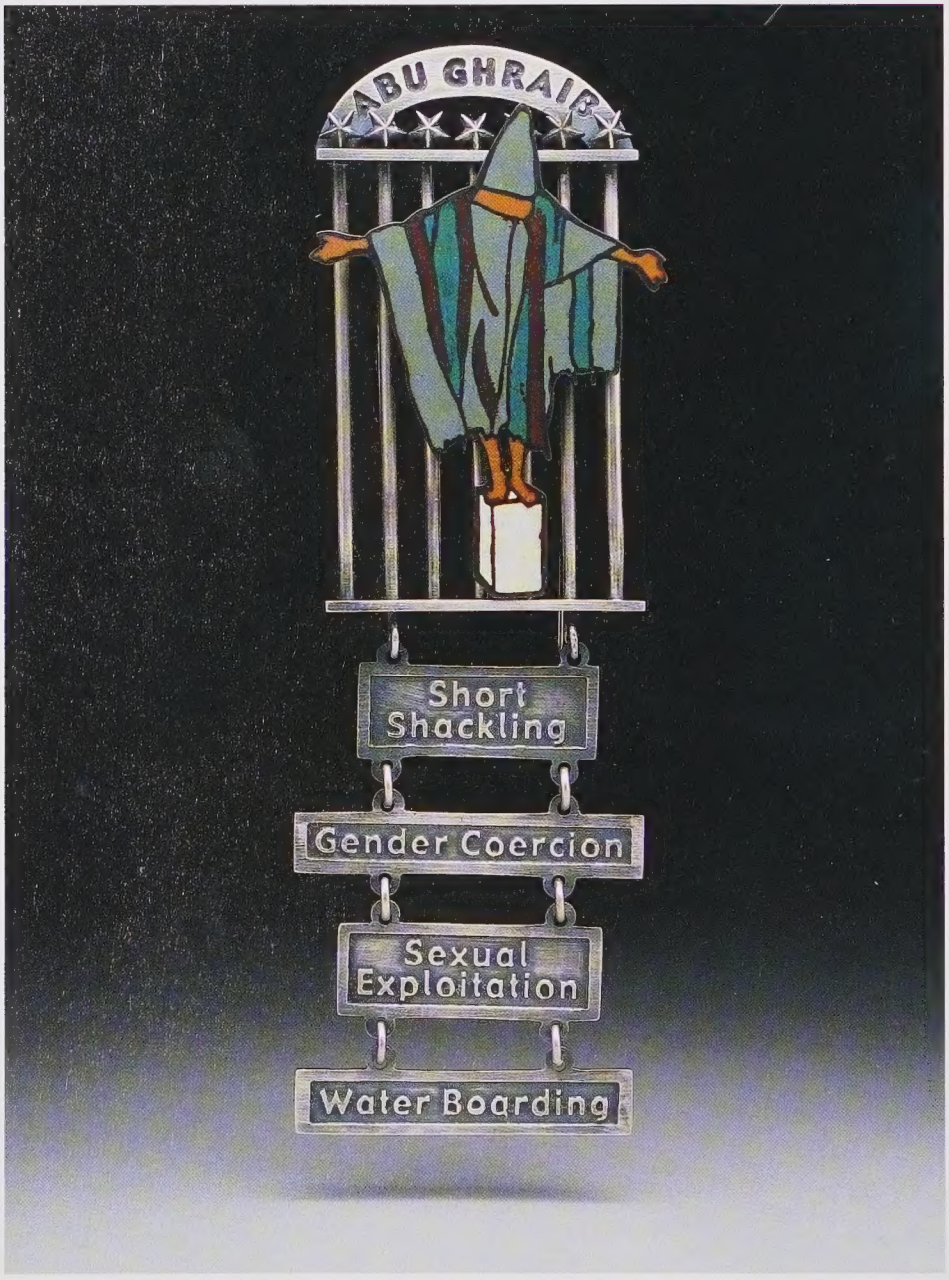
SEAN SCULLY
Patriot Pin Series – Batch 1/400
expanded PVC plastic, silver, stickers, capsules
1 ⅛ x ⅜ x ¾"



ELIZABETH TURRELL
From the series "Collateral Damage: Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (detail), 2008
enamel on steel, drawn, painted, enamel decals
11 ¾ x 11 ¾"

The recent anti-war medals by artists contribute to a larger body of work by outraged citizens. The American anti-war medals in particular seem to be fueled not only by anger, but also by betrayal, shame, and grief.

KATHLEEN BROWNE
Interrogation Expert: Abu Ghraib, 2007
fine silver, sterling silver, vitreous enamel
1 ¾ x 2 ¼"



history of enamel badges in Germany with the personal sentiments of many of the artists resulted in a fine contempt for the duplicity of the Bush administration and its British allies. Some participants took the opportunity to pay homage to family members who had lost their lives in both European wars.

Turrell herself has relentlessly addressed war, destruction, and violence in her enamel work. She often incorporates the text of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* and makes liberal use of crosses to signify war dead. Turrell's father never recovered from his experiences in a Japanese prison camp, and that has colored her life and work. Her enamel compositions combine the graphic design of posters with collaged surfaces, torn-looking edges, and the memory of fire. She taps into a deep grief and rage at the costs of violence. They seem to recall first hand the London blitz, the bombing of Dresden, and other civilian casualties that we Americans have been spared.

Kathleen Browne responded to Turrell's invitation not from personal experience but from humanitarian empathy in protesting the abuses at Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib prisons. Browne's badge *Interrogation Expert: Abu Ghraib* uses the iconic hooded victims of torture in the Iraq war to express her horror at her country's involvement in such activities. Browne's usual narrative is a sardonic social commentary, but her badges, based on the classic form of military medals, are pointed and full of righteous anger.

But, as Yitzhak Rabin once said, enough of blood and tears.[4] Eventually, there's humor too. Bruce Metcalf has long used narrative, be it personal, topical, or literary, in his intimate sculptural jewelry and objects. During the Vietnam War Metcalf created the satiric *Worms From Mars Invade an Authentic New England Village and are Attacked by the National Guard,* featuring armed conflict between soldiers and invertebrates. He in fact taught at Kent State University, though not at the time of the National Guard shootings. Mostly, the little humor in anti-war medals is bitter and ironic. Biba Schutz's 2008 brooch, *Come Again*, shows President Bush and Senator McCain captured in the same frame, both surrounded with red, white, and blue condoms, suggesting what they are doing to her country.

BRUCE METCALF
Worms from Mars Invade an Authentic New England Village and are Attacked by the National Guard, 1971
painted lead, galvanized steel, and lithograph on cardboard dimensions variable
PHOTO: JOHN WILSON WHITE, PHOCASSO ST ASDAUDIO

The recent anti-war medals by artists contribute to a larger body of work by outraged citizens. The American anti-war medals in particular seem to be fueled not only by anger, but also by betrayal, shame, and grief. But where does this work belong? Today the most pungent anti-war sentiments are seen not on lapels, but online, where ongoing displays of antiwar posters are constantly updated. Google "anti-war jewelry" and find yourself caught in a time warp of peace signs and polymer clay beads spelling Peace. The artist-made badges, while intimate in size and made to be pinned on the body, are unlikely to be worn as jewelry, and truthfully, unlikely to be worn at all. Maybe, as badges, they could be used for ceremonial occasions. Maybe we should think of them as ideological souvenirs. Take the format of the iconic badge and subvert its respect for authority, valor, and sacrifice. In its place, confront its role in the waste of human life, and betrayal of one's country's cherished values.

The more I looked at work from the anti-war shows, the less I was able to cite only a few as powerful. Suddenly it seemed there were lots of metalsmiths with much to say. Everyone had an observation, a complaint, a protest. There were many guns, much barbed wire, many broken hearts: grief and rage and loss. The aggregate impact of nearly 200 medals created on request is strangely comforting, if rationally disappointing. Disappointing because rationally it's clear that even a thousand protest medals will make no difference in the war's outcome. But comforting because there is strength in numbers.

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith and writer residing in Philadelphia.

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1 See the author's "The Sign of The Badge" catalogue essay for *The Enamel Experience*, International Badge Exhibition, 2007.

2 *The New York Times*, January 6, 1995.

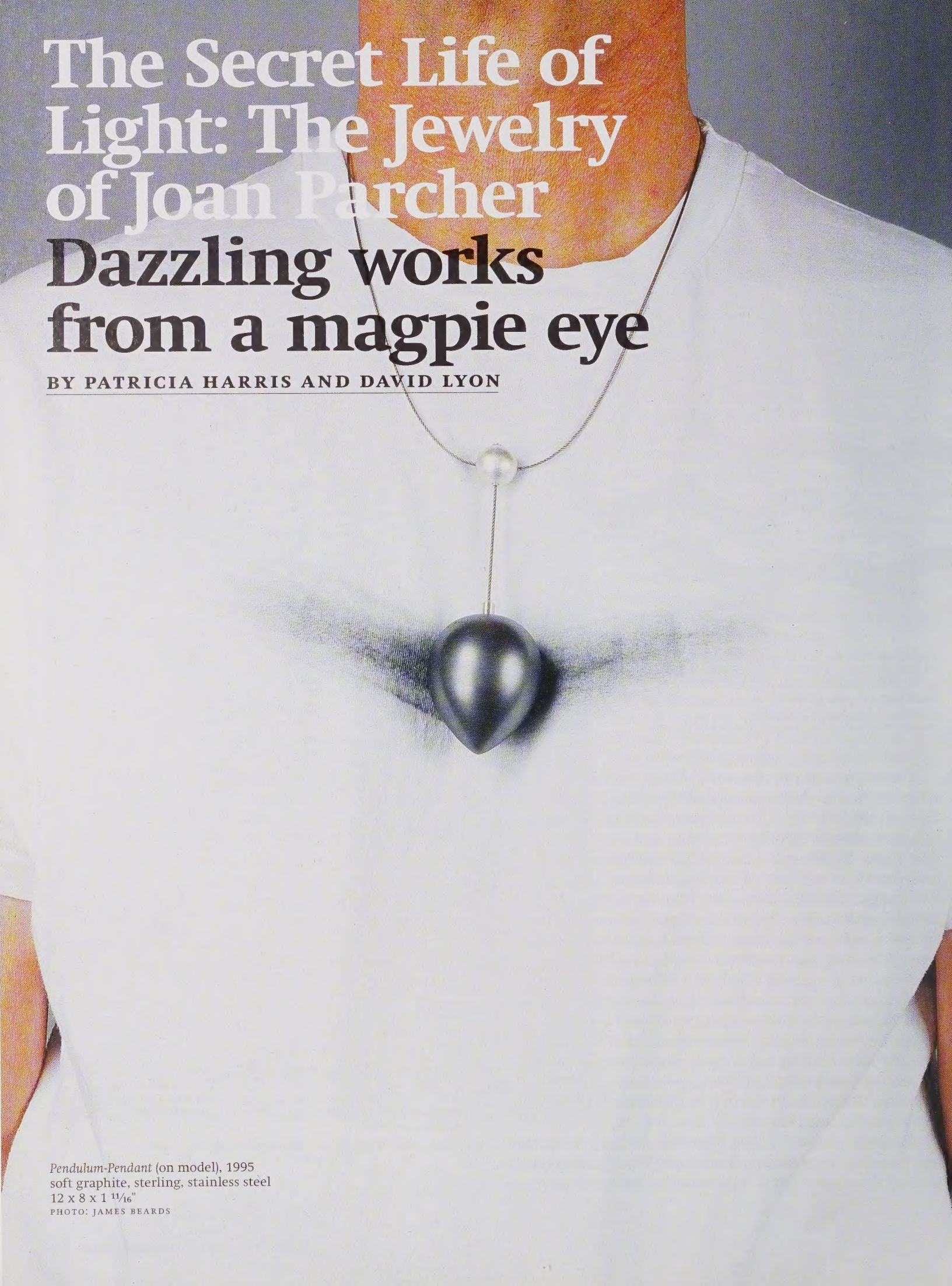
3 The original, and in my opinion the strongest, of these exhibitions traveled around Europe for several years. A later version showed in the U.S. at Thomas Mann's Gallery in New Orleans, and a third generation of the exhibition traveled to Sam Shaw's Jewelry Gallery in summer 2008.

4 *The New York Times*, June 6, 2008, quoted by A.O. Scott.

The Secret Life of Light: The Jewelry of Joan Parcher

Dazzling works from a magpie eye

BY PATRICIA HARRIS AND DAVID LYON



Pendulum-Pendant (on model), 1995
soft graphite, sterling, stainless steel
12 x 8 x 1 11/16"
PHOTO: JAMES BEARDS

Mica Chain, 1995–2008
mica, 18k gold
length 72"
PHOTO: JAMES BEARDS

JOAN PARCHER'S HOME studio is a study in her wide-ranging, sometimes seemingly unrelated interests. A box brims over with paint sample strips from Home Depot interspersed with scraps of color snipped from the pages of glossy magazines. Three substantial blocks of pure graphite, stacked one on top of another, sit at one end of a bench. Thin sheets of mica in myriad golden tones, some laced with crackling black lines, lie atop white paper, which emphasizes their translucency. Another bench is nearly covered with eighteenth-century hardware taken from New England furniture. A large jar filled with infinitesimal glass balls stands next to a bowl full of scrap blobs of clear industrial crystal glass.

"This is nothing," she all but apologizes. "I have boxes of found things in the attic. I like learning from them but I don't really use them."

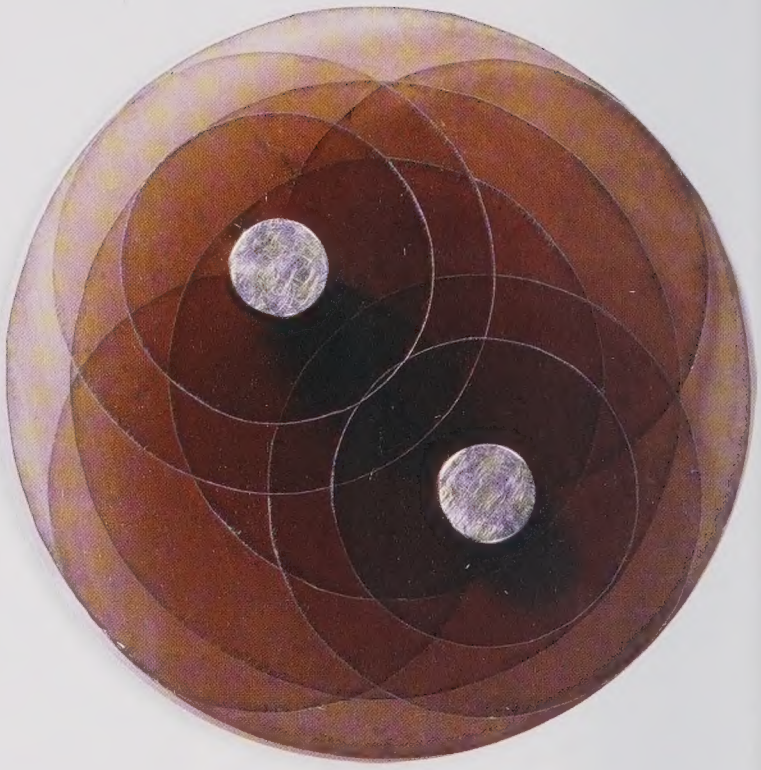
That's not quite true. Everything Parcher touches has the potential to inspire. Unusual materials, in particular, capture her imagination, tugging away at the sleeve of her subconscious until she finds some way to incorporate them into her work. Disparate as the items are, nearly everything lying around her studio these days eventually will lead to her current body of work, the series of metal, glass, and enamel objects she calls "Phosphenes."

Take the graphite blocks, for example. Parcher first encountered the slippery mineral as part of the rubble used to stabilize a town park shoreline on Lake Erie in Lakewood, Ohio. "Right at the bottom of the rocks were these big pieces of graphite," probably discarded graphite crucibles from nearby steel mills. "I just thought it was a really beautiful material," she says. "I was going to make a necklace out of it in grad school, but I didn't because it would damage clothes. It was only later on that I realized that would be a good thing."

Drawn back to the graphite nearly two decades later, Parcher used lathe-turned spherical and teardrop forms to create pendants that swing back and forth like a clock pendulum on the wearer's chest, literally marking time. The dark stain that the pendant leaves on the clothing brands the wearer as part of the art, making the necklaces function as a kind of performance art. They are the antithesis of heirloom jewelry: the more each one is worn, the more it disintegrates. Parcher's graphite pendants are anti-jewelry, just as graphite is anti-diamond: another form of carbon with completely opposite physical qualities. Yet there is no denying the sensual qualities of the graphite surface, an almost greasy matte black as lovely as gold or gemstones.

Parcher's personal history with mica is similar. The Kent State University art major also collected sheets of mica during her years in Ohio, and when she moved to Rhode Island (where she did her MFA work at Rhode Island School of Design), she began collecting mica-infused granite rocks found throughout New England. "I even made some of them into brooches," she says, "but I stopped because I couldn't think of enough things to do." She turns one over in her hands, letting a lamp on her bench play on the surface. "See how it glitters?"

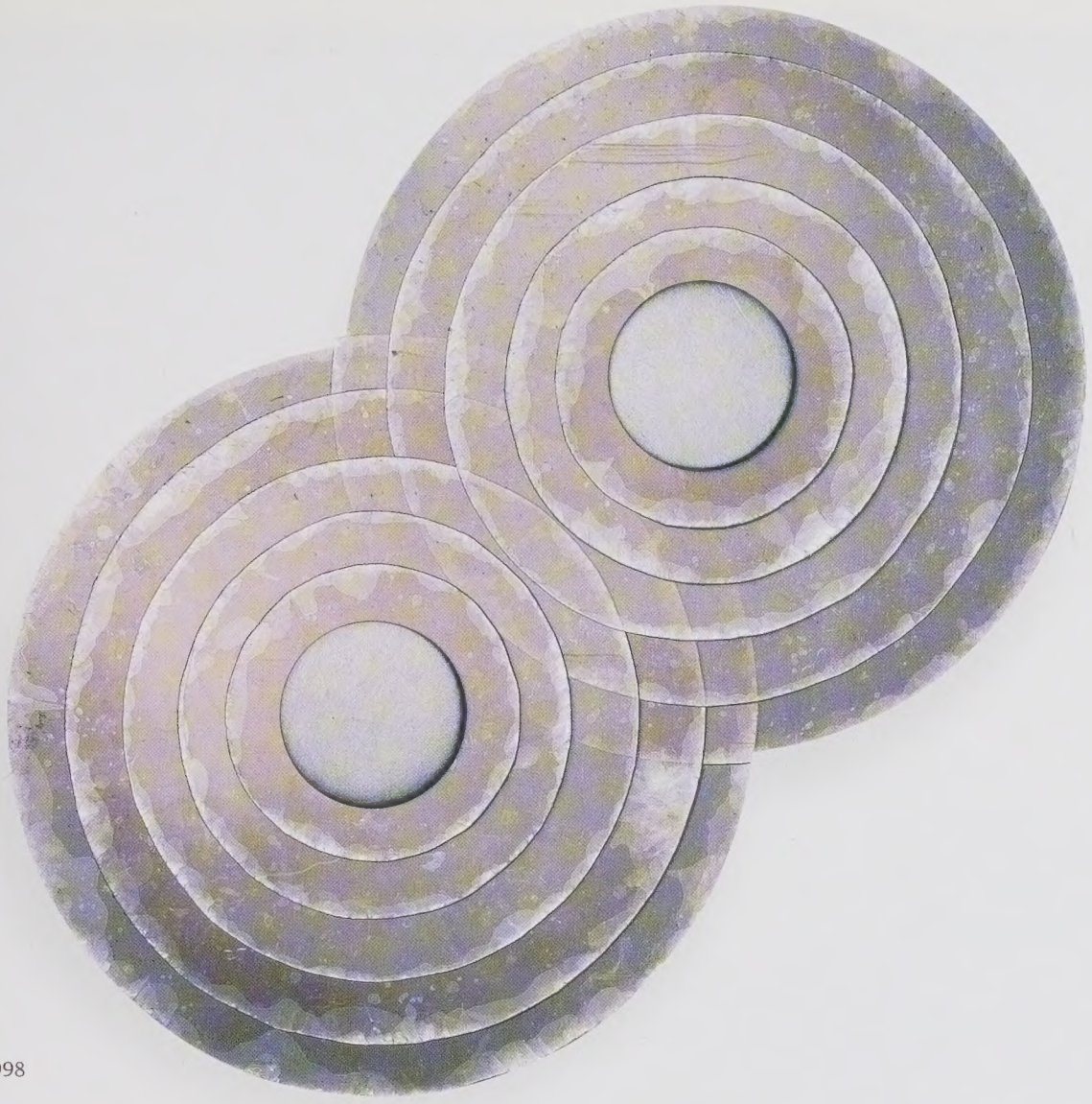
Parcher admits to a magpie attraction to things that glitter and shine. "Mica is so light and sparkly," she says. "I had to do something with it."



Mica Brooch, 1999
mica, sterling
3 ⅛ x 3 ⅛ x ½"
PHOTO: JAMES BEARDS

Parcher admits to a magpie attraction to things that glitter and shine. "Mica is so light and sparkly," she says. "I had to do something with it." She finally decided to exploit both the light weight of the mineral as well as its peculiar sensual quality: it seems to trap liquid light between its plate-like sheets. Since mica frays at the edges when cut with most hand tools (a tendency she exploited in a few brooches and earrings), she started working with commercial mica disks and washers with sharply cut edges. The lightness, in particular, inspired her series of looped mica necklaces, which Parcher describes as being made "the same way you'd make a simple chain out of metal loops—but I knew I couldn't make a 12-foot chain out of metal that anyone could wear, or would want to."

Simply cutting the washers with scissors allows her to daisy-chain them. Using epoxy, she laminates two washers



Mica Brooch #1, 1998
mica, sterling
3 7/8 x 2 1/2 x 1/2"
PHOTO: JAMES BEARDS

together, their cut edges at opposite points to ensure maximum security. "It weighs next to nothing," she says. The only problem with these long chain necklaces (most are only six feet) is that they are so light that some people forget they're wearing them. The material is so insubstantial that it seems to fly—easily catching on doorknobs or coat buttons. Frankly, this is part of the magic of Parcher's mica jewelry. Mica used this way seems to be pure golden-hued light, more a comely force field than an object.

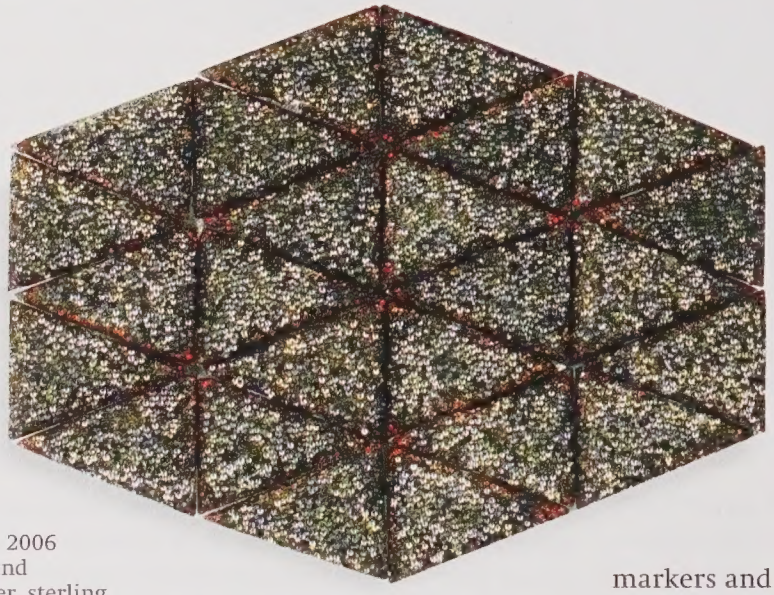
Parcher may be best known for her enamel production work, most notably flower earrings with a deceptively simple but exceedingly secure catch. "I'm a lucky girl that I was taught to enamel," says Parcher, who first learned the technique at Kent State from the late Mel Someroski. "Not that many people can do it. I just have a cheap little kiln, but it's a wonderful thing to do. It's fun to get to work with colors and glass."

The flower motif production jewelry has given her ample opportunity to explore and exploit color. She has been producing these pieces since the 1980s, a testament to the staying power of an elegant design that is the jeweler's equivalent of tucking a flower behind your ear. Parcher buys the copper petal shapes, raises them, then enamels them in a range of up to 60 different colors (in many cases using vintage American enamels given to her over the years), then rivets a hematite bead as the flower center. She also finishes all her findings from castings she has made from a prototype.

Parcher's obvious satisfaction in engineering the much-admired catch finds a counterpart in her "other business," as she puts it, of repairing and reproducing antique furniture hardware. While it's a specialty she more or less fell into, she grows enthusiastic as she brings out rare handmade brass drawer pulls, decorative plates, and other hardware that she uses as models. She points out the exquisite balance of one pull, with the freely swinging handle fitted by hand into tiny brass brackets. She marvels over the handmade bolts and matching handmade nuts. She lays out a series of slightly different brasses, all imported from England, that serve as base plates for drawer pulls on eighteenth-century furniture made in New England.

She admires both the untutored artistry of the designs and the extraordinary craftsmanship that produced the final products. "Look how wonderful the positive and negative spaces are," she says. "Whoever designed these

Seven Circle Brooch, 2007
reflective glass and enamel on copper, sterling
3 x 3 x ½"
PHOTO: SCOTT LAPHAM



Phosphene Brooch, 2006
reflective glass and enamel on copper, sterling
3 ½ x 3 x ½"
PHOTO: SCOTT LAPHAM

plates didn't go to art school. They probably cut the prototype from folded paper. And the casting was excellent. More than 200 years later, we don't seem to be able to do such a good job."

Like the antique hardware, Parcher's current jewelry stands out by dint of the workmanship that produces objects that transcend their component materials. She calls the series "Phosphenes," referring to the term for the sparkles of light produced by rubbing one's closed eyes. The "Phosphene" series also had its genesis in her long-time attraction to industrial detritus. "My grandparents worked in a glass factory near Pittsburgh," she recalls. "There was a huge dump nearby where they threw all the glass. I would make my dad take me to see it. The ground just glittered."

Parcher is captivated by novel materials, and she admits that she has to learn about the properties of each before she understands how to employ it in her art. "If it takes a long time to come out in my work," she says, "that's okay. Working with materials, weird problems come up and you have to be able to figure out a solution." She seems to relish the challenge. She never did figure what to do with the scrap glass from the factory dump, but began experimenting with tiny glass spheres in 1994. Her husband consults to the asphalt industry, which uses spherical glass beads suspended in special paints to create the reflective lines for highway lane markers and city street crosswalks.

After trying several options, Parcher settled on .06 mm lead crystal glass balls that are typically used for sandblasting. By explaining her use for the beads, she was able to persuade a German firm to sell them to her in 65-pound bags—a tiny quantity by industrial standards.

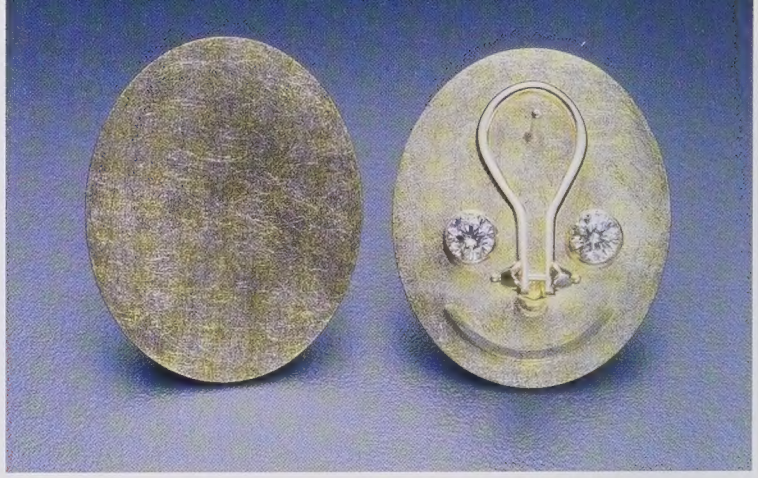
Enameling the glass balls to copper forms, Parcher says, is a logical technical progression from color enamel, except that she has far less control over the application of the beads than she does over the application of powdered enamel. Most of the pieces in the "Phosphene" series are constructed from individual geometric pieces fastened at the back to a supporting armature. "I went to RISD," Parcher shrugs, "so it's circle, square, triangle. When I try to make more organic shapes, it just looks forced to me."

More often than not, Parcher opts to work with triangles because she can fit them together like a tile puzzle, creating brooches in different shapes. The triangles have another intriguing challenge. "The point of a triangle isn't good for holding enamel or the glass beads either,"

"My grandparents worked in a glass factory near Pittsburgh," she recalls. "There was a huge dump nearby where they threw all the glass. I would make my dad take me to see it. The ground just glittered."

Phosphene Brooch (detail), 2006
reflective glass, enamel on
copper, sterling silver
2 3/4 x 2 3/8 x 1/2"
PHOTO: CYNTHIA BRENNAN

Circle Earrings, 2004
vitreous enamel, oxidized sterling,
14k gold posts
1 3/8 x 1 1/4 x 1/2"



Secret Smile Earrings (front and back), 2004
18k gold, diamonds
1 3/8 x 15/16 x 7/16"
PHOTO: JAMES BEARDS

she says. "They're going to burn, fall off, or otherwise get screwed up. I like precision with randomness. I'm attracted to opposites."

As a result, each component in a "Phosphene" brooch has an "edge effect" and a "point effect" where the regularity of the glass beads is interrupted. On the final piece, these "thin spots" read as carefully scribed lines with a reddish hint of the copper beneath, emphasizing the composite nature of each piece of jewelry.

The fused glass beads on the surface didn't provide quite the explosive sparkle that Parcher was seeking, so after a great deal of trial and error she discovered that she could achieve the desired effect by depositing a reflective silver mirror on the glass surfaces, using much the same technique used commercially to create silvered Christmas tree ornaments. She then polishes the mirror off the top surface, leaving it in place between the beads. ("It took a lot of tries until I got it right," she admits.) The resulting material has a distinct mineral quality, as if it were formed over eons by some geological process rather than in hours at Parcher's bench and in her kiln. The backs of the forms, which generally include an attachment, are conventionally enameled.

In effect, Parcher is creating her own materials through combination and recombination, much as a quilt artist might create fabric through elaborate piecing, painting, cutting, and restitching. The geometric objects are a kind of "Parcherite," if you will. They have the glitter of the glass factory dump, the sparkle of mica, the serenity of graphite, and the craft of all her years as an enamelist and an antique hardware restorer.

Looking closely at the interlocking triangles in one of her "Phosphene" enamel brooches is a bit like viewing aerial photographs of the surface of Mars—except that the "canals" on planet Phosphene are much straighter and there are more of them. Parcher's work invites this kind of close observation, as if the viewer were descending through a rarefied atmosphere to a surface that seems both random and reticulate, as patterns emerge with the play of light.

The "Phosphene" series also represents a radical departure from Parcher's signature use of color patches. The individual enameled pieces in other lines of Parcher's work tend to be pure representation of color within a bezeled frame. Rather than shiny, they are almost always matte. Each enameled disk in Circle Earrings (2007), for example, is a free-floating element attached to the domed silver base. They float like petals in a breeze. And above all, they are colorful.

In effect, Parcher is creating her own materials through combination and recombination, much as a quilt artist might create fabric through elaborate piecing, painting, cutting, and restitching.

By contrast, the "Phosphene" series brooches demonstrate a newfound formality—almost like the difference between color and black-and-white photography. The triangles covered with enamel, glass beads, and silver mirror fit together as rigidly as if they were tectonic plates of a planetary crust. The words "fun" and "whimsy" are often attached to Parcher's jewelry, particularly her production work. The "Phosphene" series illustrates her gravitas.

But gravitas need not be stiff and stuffy. The 20 circles in *Phosphene Brooch* could be lily pads, an archipelago of islands, or a raft of floe ice. They look as if they could slip and slide around in constant motion, yet Parcher has fastened them rigidly across the back, grouping clusters in such a way that the overall piece maintains a rigid stability and can be attached with a single bar pin.

With the "Phosphene" series, Parcher has created a new strain of work open to limitless variation. Unlike the mica-infused rocks that stymied her imagination, these Parcher-made "stones" invite combination and re-combination into ever more complex figures. Yet at heart these geometric objects with mysterious, reflective surfaces are still about an interior brilliance, the spark that illuminates Parcher as a master of light.

Patricia Harris and David Lyon are writers based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Tin Can Brooch, 2005
vitreous enamel on tin can lid,
oxidized sterling
3 ¾ x 3 ¾ x ¼"
PHOTO: JAMES BEARDS

Reviews

Out of the Shell:
Recontextualizing the Pearl in Contemporary Jewelry

Gallery Loupe,
Montclair, NJ
May 1–June 15, 2008

by Ulysses Grant Dietz

As a curator of jewelry, I have an ongoing problem with pearls. It's not that I don't like pearls; I love them. The problem is that the iconic, classic string of pearls is so timeless as to be useless, art-historically speaking. It has no style per se. It can't be discussed in terms of the rococo or the neo-classical or the post-modern.

Thus the exhibition co-curated by Sherry Simms and Sayumi Yokouchi, "Out of the Shell," is a welcome and intriguing event. Simms and Yokouchi, both jewelry artists themselves, asked 17 artists from 10 different countries to think about the pearl and reinterpret it in their work. The range of responses was as diverse as the widespread geography and aesthetics of the artists themselves. Some chose to pay homage to the tradition of pearls as precious stones; others chose to *evoke* the pearl by referring to its form, its color, or luster.

At Gallery Loupe, the front window was filled with co-curator Sherry Simms's own evocation of the pearl: a gargantuan necklace of graduated Styrofoam balls densely covered in pearlescent plastic rosettes, artificial rose blossoms, and faux pearls. Thus the timeless, useless pearl necklace becomes a work of conceptual abstraction worthy of Jeff Koons. Simms's work conjures up the very idea of pearl-ness—the color, the surface, the romantic resonance of this most ancient of gemstones.

The opposite poles of the exhibition are demonstrated in the works of American artist Jamie Bennett and Leonor Hipólito of Portugal. Bennett kept to a traditional use of pearls, stringing small freshwater pearls on a wire as a frame for a large central oval of his own exquisite, surreal enameling. The heritage of such brooches stretches as far back as the Renaissance, and while Bennett's is very much a modern version, it projects a quirky primitive quality, as if it were somehow prehistoric. Hipólito, on the other hand, made an art work that is more *about* jewelry than jewelry itself. In her five-part "Out of the Shell" series, she first created three vicious-looking little metal tools, avatars of those used to fatally tear the pearl from its oyster. The other two components are strings of real mid-sized baroque freshwater pearls encased in petri dish–like plastic cases. One of these has been lovingly wrapped in sterile white gauze, the other

LEONOR HIPÓLITO
Out of the Shell (necklaces), 2008
river pearls, cotton gauze, adhesive tape
approx length 9"

MARU ALMEIDA
Untitled (brooch), 2007
wool, coral, pearls, silver
3 ½ x 3 x 2"

in "flesh"-colored adhesive bandages. It is as if she were trying to heal the damage caused by harvesting the pearls, and their characteristic beauty can be glimpsed only fleetingly beneath the wrappings.

Both Mari Ishikawa and Helen Britton are "foreigners" who have settled in Germany, and both have produced beautiful, wonderfully crafted abstract sculptures in which pearls inspire the color, texture, and form. Ramon Puig Cuyàs, from Barcelona, makes what are essentially 3-D miniature paintings, in which the pearls provide the narrative of the art. American Joe Wood has taken the show's title literally, making exquisitely crafted large-scale brooches out of mother-of-pearl, the nacreous shell lining of the mollusk.

Artists Maru Almeida and Meiri Ishida both address the pearl in the surprising material of felt. Almeida's organic felted-wool forms evoke the original undersea context from which the pearls are taken, while Ishida's massive layered felt brooches comment on the many layers of nacre that have built up to create the pearl. Turkish artist Ela Cindoruk applies pearls to her lacy floral abstractions made from newspapers, playing on the Turkish interpretation of the word pearl as "precious sayings." In a similar vein, American Julia Turner sets pearls into a painted wood brooch; they seem to represent moments of synaptic connection or place markers on an abstracted internal map.

Sofia Calderwood, using commercial plastic grocery bags, reinterprets the idea of the pearl as an irritant, encasing tiny seed pearls in layers of pearlescent laminated plastic. Similarly, Yevgeniya Kaganovich uses cast rubber and plastic to create a counterpoint between precious and non-precious materials, in one instance "trapping" an ordinary string of freshwater pearls in a necklace of large cast transparent rubber beads.

The most extreme recontextualization comes from the artists who don't use actual pearls at all. Impressed by the iridescent surface and bead-like form of Japanese rubber fitness balls, Mikiko Minewaki made strings—each bead carefully hand-knotted—of these stand-in pearls. Lin Cheung crocheted the silk thread used for stringing and knotting pearl necklaces into a choker of iridescent white silk beads, evoking the archetypal pearl necklace.

Finnish artist Tarja Tuupanen, who works in opaque stone, carved a string of aspirin-sized flat beads in bright white marble, and another large ovoid pendant

evoking a massive baroque pearl of milky quartz. The brashest concepts come from Germans Karl Fritsch and Norman Weber. Fritsch jams a melted faux black pearl onto a gold ring, and a pale rectangular aquamarine into it, perhaps a mocking statement about the thoughtlessness of modern jewelry, or the current obsession with the pairing of disharmonious materials. Weber also seems to be mocking the vulgarity of nouveau-riche baubles with his enormous plastic gems and faux pearls, spray-painted with neon orange paint; and yet behind his pieces one finds the craftsmanship of a master metalsmith. It is work that is bombastic and affectionate, aptly expressing the complex feelings toward the pearl—and the jewel in general—that makes this exhibition so compelling and important.

Ulysses Grant Dietz is Senior Curator and Curator of Decorative Arts at The Newark Museum.

Pan Pacific:
A Spotlight on Asian Techniques and Influences in Contemporary Studio Jewelry

Aaron Faber Gallery,
New York, NY
April 29–June 1, 2008

by Andrea DiNoto

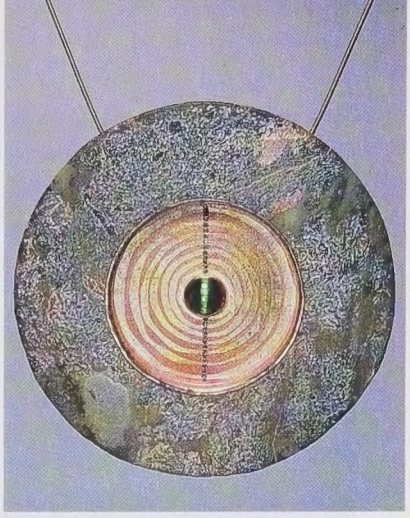
Geographically speaking, "Pan Pacific" encompasses a huge region, more than 30 countries, plus island nations; but for the purposes of this ambitiously named yet intimate exhibition the focus was—not surprisingly—on Japan, China, the South Pacific, and simply Asian-inflected states of mind. About 100 items by 23 Asian and Western jewelry artists ranged from classically inspired (George Sawyer's suave mokume gane rings and Harlan Butt's exquisitely enameled tea containers) to free-wheeling experimental. In the latter category, Susan Chin achieves dramatic East-West fusion with gold-in-ebony inlay earrings that might be contemporary tribal talismans, while Peggy Eng's sculpted aluminum brush-stroke brooch evokes a Roy Lichtenstein painting as if done by a sumi artist. Kiwon Wang's ephemeral "Fabric of Life" brooches, made from pearls, thread, celluloid, and written-on *washi* paper with words in both English and Korean, appeared to be referencing globalized design, in which Asian materials are reconfigured in contemporary, non-traditional form; but they also honor both the pearl and the oversize bead *(ojime)* as traditional accessories to and components of Asian costume.

The Japanese influence was most evident among the dedicated metalworkers. Both George Sawyer and Steve Midgett are well known for their mastery of the mokume gane technique, in which different metals are layered, then sliced, to produce suave moiré patterns. Sawyer's work is by now familiar, but several of the examples on view, particularly the gold-striped "Symmetry" rings made with14k and 24k gray gold and sterling silver, have a fresh, shimmering beauty that verged on the atmospheric: think early morning sun gleaming on crystalline water. Midgett's 1 ¼-inch diameter *Orbit* lapel pin in blue titanium, tantalum, and gold, set with a planet-like diamond, shows how effectively the technique adapts to new metals and vibrant color. In contrast, his *Shell Form Brooch* in yellow and red gold and platinum, set with diamonds and conch pearl, suggests a Rococo rendering of Hokusai's wave.

PEGGY ENG
Brushstroke Brooch, 2008
anodized aluminum

"Pan Pacific" provided a rare opportunity to view the work of master enamelist Butt, who has studied the technique in Japan, and who has deeply absorbed and embraced the Japanese esthetic (read his own haiku on his web site). His vessel series "1001 Views of Mt. Mu" consists of three jewel-like enamel-on-silver (or copper) tea ceremony boxes called *natsume*, intended to hold powdered tea. These gourd-shaped boxes are most commonly made from lacquer, but Butt's renditions, using transparent layers of colored enamels over silver foil leaves, raises this particular art form to the level of *objet de vertu*. Butt has described the leaves—maple and oak, native to both North America and Asia, and to the locales of his childhood—as "kind of metaphors for the affect of nature on my life and work." They appear to be tumbling downward, suggesting the passage of time, seasons, and intimations of mortality.

Certainly the most commanding piece in the show was Michael Zobel's massive *Pendant*, a weighty jade disc embellished with gold, cat's eye tourmaline and green diamonds. This piece references the ancient and mysterious Chinese *bi* discs, jade circles with a round center hole, which date from the Neolithic era and were symbolic representations of the cosmos, but also served as indications of rank. *Bi* discs were also thought to preserve the body in death; many have been found in tombs. The earliest of these discs were usually plain, like Zobel's: without carving, simply elemental slices of the revered stone. Zobel allows the only partially polished surface of the jade to reveal its earthy texture, and to frame the gorgeous golden center "eye," whose concentric pattern is bisected with a line of diamonds. A celestial compass? A mini Stonehenge? Surely it is no mere ornament.



MICHAEL ZOBEL
Pendant, 2003
18k rose gold, 24k gold, jade, cats-eye tourmaline, green diamonds

With its great variety of work, "Pan Pacific" proved—in new and refreshing ways—that the seduction of Western art by Asian aesthetics and philosophy remains a vital, ongoing, and reciprocal love story. The Impressionists freely acknowledged their debt to the Japanese print; the Abstract Expressionists based an entire art movement on the calligraphic gesture; Minimalism, inspired initially by the Zen principle of reduction of form to its essentials, became a force in Western art that lured many twentieth-century Asian artists from the pictorial

to the abstract. But, as "Pan Pacific" reminds us, it is the contemporary studio jeweler who has been most effective in mastering, reinterpreting, and preserving traditional Asian techniques that might otherwise have been lost.

Andrea DiNoto is a New York-based writer on the arts and design.

From the Village to *Vogue*: *The Modernist Jewelry of Art Smith*

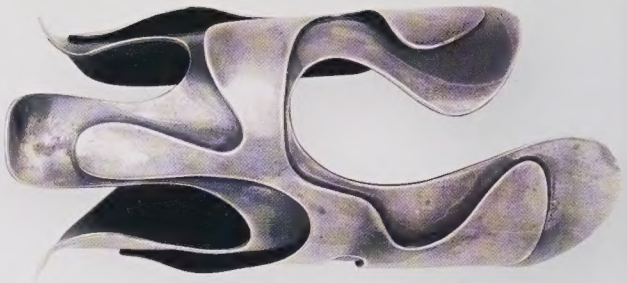
Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY
May 14, 2008–May 17, 2009

by Kate Fogarty

This year-long exhibition of modernist jeweler Art Smith's work is a small, rich treat best savored slowly. The tinkling Count Basie wafting through the air, the room lined with black-and-white vintage photos of models draped in his jewelry, the wall text in period fonts, all usher one to enjoy the glass-topped cases displaying 21 of Smith's biomorphic creations. They're as enticingly fresh as the day Smith created them in his shop and studio in mid-century Greenwich Village, then a hotbed of liberal politics, art, and thought.

Smith was born to Jamaican parents in Cuba in 1917 who settled in Brooklyn soon afterward. He showed early promise as an artist, and was one of a handful of black students awarded a scholarship to Cooper Union in the late '30s. Though advised to study the "practical" discipline of architecture, his lack of aptitude for mathematics led him to commercial art and sculpture. Night courses in jewelry and the mentorship of black jewelry designer Winifred Mason led Smith to open his own studio and shop on Cornelia Street in 1946. After racial trouble on this "Italian block," he moved to 140 West Fourth Street, and business took off. By the mid-50s Smith's work was a favorite in stores across the country, from Bloomingdales to high-end boutiques.

Smith became acquainted with many of New York's leading black artists, including singers Lena Horne and Harry Belafonte, writer James Baldwin, and the principals of several avant-garde black dance companies, for which he designed performance jewelry. His work caught the eye of *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar*, and attracted commissions from the likes of Eleanor Roosevelt and Duke Ellington. He was the subject of a one-man exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Crafts in 1969 (now the Museum of Art and Design) and was included in the seminal traveling exhibition "Objects USA" in 1970. Though in declining health, he continued to design pieces into the 1970s, and died in 1982.



Lava Bracelet, ca. 1946 sterling silver

Smith's jewelry was daring at the start, and just kept astounding. He mainly worked in inexpensive materials such as copper and brass; as business picked up and commissions rolled in, he favored silver and semiprecious or hard stones, and the rare gold piece (only one is on view). The earliest works in the show are among the most alluring. His silver *Half and Half* necklace of 1948 is half breastplate, half loopy openwork, and like its contemporaries, the dramatic *Lava* and *Modern Cuff* bracelets of the late 40s, uses the dark patina produced by soldering to artistic effect. There's a consistency to Smith's work, but it's by no means boring: each piece, whatever it explores, is executed with confidence, creativity, and an obvious relish in the human form. One longs to try them on, the Ellington necklace of 1962, for example, dripping in languid teardroppy silver forms studded in turquoise, amethyst, prase, and rhodonite. Is it heavy? How does it feel encircling the neck? And how must its artistic punch be rendered a knockout by the wearer's skin beneath? While it's easy enough to appreciate these deeply sculptural pieces in their display cases, their blatant sensuality would be further compounded when against the human skin, as the fashion photos suggest. As Smith himself remarked in 1979, "The idea is to titillate the eye of the beholder, not with the decoration, but with the body that the decoration enhances."

Model wearing Art Smith's Modern Cuff *bracelet, ca. 1948.*

This career-spanning collection of Smith's work, along with ephemera ranging from his original shop sign, tools, working drawings, unfinished jewelry, photographs, and correspondence, was bequeathed by the artist to his sister, then conveyed to an intimate of his, who has donated it to the museum. Curator Barry R. Harwood has complemented the Smith pieces with a suite of jewelry from the museum's collection, by Smith's contemporaries and descendants (while some mid-century examples, like those by Frank Rebajes and Elsa Freund, deserve mention, most of the recent work save Deganit Stern Shocken's does not). Whether an artist, historian, or simply an admirer, consider

visiting Smith's archive at the museum. What an inspiration to see the beginnings of his designs on the backs of shopping lists or recipes, examine his student projects and pencil-scrawled orders, and read his thoughtful typewritten letters to gallerists and associates; these elegant works of art were not produced in a vacuum, and seem all the more exciting for it.

Kate Fogarty is a New York–based writer and editor.

Jana Brevick: *Thanks, Wavelength*

SOIL Gallery, Seattle, WA
April 3–27, 2008

by Matthew Kangas

Jana Brevick has been active in the Seattle art scene since her 1999 graduation from the undergraduate metal design program led by May Lee Hu and John Marshall at the University of Washington. Prior to that, she took a degree in apparel design at Western Washington University. Brevick has been included in numerous juried and invitational group shows across the country, has curated exhibitions herself and joined SOIL Gallery in 2002, the best local artist cooperative space in Seattle. It was founded by fellow University of Washington graduates more than a decade ago and is now located in a storefront space right next to the city's major galleries in Pioneer Square.

"Thanks, Wavelength" follows on "Tinker Tailor Jeweler Spy" and "Remote Control," her two previous solo shows at SOIL. Using jewelry construction methods and materials to make autonomous, usually non-wearable, sculptures, Brevick enters a world of ornament masquerading as sculpture—or are they sculptures pretending to be ornament?

Either way, Brevick adapts the hybrid status of a lot of recent craft art: part functional thing, part useless artwork. She tries to attain independent status for objects that carry none of the mass or volume of conventional sculpture and often dithers between pedestal- and wall-mounted positioning and wearable ornament.

Listening II, 2008
sterling silver, copper
5 ½ x 1 ¼ x 2 ¼"
PHOTO: DOUG YAPLE

Thinking of You, 2008
sterling silver, copper
1 ¾ x 1 ¾ x 3"
PHOTO: DOUG YAPLE

With one exception, *Service Award* (all works are 2008), the four new sculptures steer clear of acting as potential jewelry and operate better as wall-mounted pieces. Line is the crucial formal element in much of Brevick's art and, in "Wavelength," is expressed through sterling silver rods and wires. Drawings in silver, then, the objects seem like sketches or notes more than fully realized sculptures. With their uniting theme of "wavelength" or radio waves, they allude to electronic technology, but also raise other possible strains of content such as surveillance, eavesdropping, and various methods of communication.

Listening I and *Listening II* suggest different methods of aural capture. In the former, polished and brushed metal elements are close together, jutting out from the wall from a vertical back that appears wired to the wall with copper. *Listening I* is abstract art in that it suggests it is part of something larger and more complex. With its ten small sections on the horizontal bar, and its gleaming metallic silver color, this work recalls the interior parts of computer hardware involved in listening devices, or a ham radio antenna.

Listening II is like an upright, backwards S-shape, with its perpendicular bands and open-ended sections purportedly receptive to hearing radio waves. However, with Brevick's elegant artistry and construction, the structure of antennae is evoked and honored. One is tempted to recall Brevick's earlier show, "Tinker Tailor Jeweler Spy," with its more convincing analogies of espionage. Now the sculptures are less specific, more abstract, and, as such, more spare and beautiful.

Furthering that trend, *Cactus* is the most naturalistic of the group, the least technological, suggesting that Brevick's attempts at conceptual unity within her various bodies of work are misguided attempts at intellectually dressing up work that does not always clearly reflect into her stated intentions. This is not surprising, given the numerous efforts over the past two decades to lard simple jewelry forms with complex and overwrought meanings.

Put more simply, *Cactus* is a single stem with three branches. With its flat finished ends instead of spiky thorns, this work may recall the large-scale cactus sculptures by mid-century Venetian glassblowers like Napoleone Martinuzzi and Dino Martens. Naturalistic in form, but wholly artifactual with non-naturalistic color and the cold surface of glass, the glass cacti point toward a vein of subject matter well worth pursuing further: floral blossoms and birds; tree branches; and bushes and shrubs reduced to brittle conglomerations.

Seen this way, even Brevick's *Thinking of You* (otherwise reminiscent of a satellite dish), may be seen as a flower complete with stamen and pistil. This hybrid of nature and technology, rather than that of art and craft, becomes a fruitful potential for Brevick's future imagery. Brevick is onto something here that merits additional exploration.

Meanwhile, the pendant *Service Award* could be an autobiographical comment on Brevick's many activities. With the phrase "Selfless Service" stamped on the back, and a silk navy-blue cord, Brevick is giving herself an award, an unusual seven-pointed star. This piece pushes the show toward the personal, a not entirely bad realm for West Coast artists. Of course, Service Award retreats to jewelry, ornament, and function. The scratches on the sterling silver surface of the star add a welcome note of expressionism and irony.

At a prolific crossroads between solitary, serious artmaking, community involvement and commercial handmade jewelry, Brevick still begs the question I ask after each of her exhibitions: Is she making art, or arranging social events for other people to see? At 38, this talented, quirky artist still has plenty of time for studio and career decision-making.

Matthew Kangas, a Seattle-based writer, is author of the recently published Relocations: Selected Art Essays and Interviews *(Midmarch Arts).*

Wiener Werkstätte Jewelry

Neue Galerie, New York, NY
March 10–June 30, 2008

by Andrea DiNoto

If Rene Lalique championed the concept of jewelry as equivalent to art, the Wiener Werkstätte provided its formal embrace. The Neue Galerie's stunning exhibition of more than 40 objects—the first devoted to the Werkstätte's rare and distinctive jewels—offered a unique opportunity to view a collection of objects generated from a singular design philosophy, that of the collaborative of artists and craftsmen founded in Vienna in 1903 by Josef Hoffmann and Koloman Moser, with the financier Fritz Waerndorfer. Dedicated to modernity in design and to the then-radical belief (prevalent during the Renaissance, however) that functional and decorative objects were the equal of fine art objects, the Werkstätte produced architecture, furniture, silverware, textiles, and more. In each category, the designers aspired to the ideal of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or total work of art, a concept introduced a few years earlier by the Vienna Secession, a progressive art movement around the turn of the century, which included the painter Gustav Klimt. It is easy to agree with this exhibition's curator, Jane Staggs, that among all of the Werkstätte's notable output, the jewelry, above all else, most successfully achieved this goal. Characterized by the use of silver, sometimes accented by gold and predominantly non-precious stones, this was jewelry valued primarily for the quality of its design. And striking design it was.

Composed of mainly brooches, necklaces, and bracelets (earrings were not in vogue at the time), the jewelry on view expressed the same principles that guided all of the Werkstätte's decorative and applied arts: a sense of graphic compression—which owed a debt to the ideas expressed by the British Arts & Crafts movement—and a restrained Art Nouveau lyricism inspired not only by Lalique but also by the contemporaneous work of Louis Comfort Tiffany. The group also elevated the role of handicraft, so that pieces by any one of its leading artists often bear marks of both designer and craftsman. (Werkstätte craftsmen marks are rendered in a circle; designers' monograms are square.) While the Werkstätte's craftsmen did not design, they were entrusted with producing the final, often complex objects, sometimes from fairly simple artists' renderings.

KOLOMAN MOSER
Necklace, 1904
Executed by the Wiener Werkstätte
silver, amber
length 78 ¾"

DAGOBERT PECHE
Pendant, 1920
Executed by Anton Pribil for the Oskar Dietrich firm for the Wiener Werkstätte
gold, pearl
2 ½ x 1 ½"

Josef Hoffmann's square brooches are among the most magnificent examples of jewelry in this form. Hoffmann's approach was to divide the square (typically two by two inches) into strong vertical and horizontal planes, then to insert clusters of colored cabochon stones, often together with areas of hammered goldwork that basically functioned as stones, but with added texture. The result is a series of objects that, with their distinct framing, become miniature abstract paintings. In fact, Hoffmann's golden "eye" brooch motifs appear in paintings by Klimt, who was a major collector of the Werkstätte's jewelry. In another example of Hoffmann's genius, a tumble of stones seems held between pillars of silver. After 1908, Hoffmann's style became looser, adopting the flowing curvilinear motifs of Art Nouveau (or Jugendstil, as it was called in Germany).

Of Koloman Moser's diverse output, his long silver chain-link necklaces typically incorporating opals, moonstones, and lapis lazuli in stepped cascades are most stunning. Moser's designs took note of the new "reform" fashion, which called for loose, flowing dresses that could provide unstructured background for his often weighted chains. His fascination with natural forms is most evident in a gold necklace whose pendant is a cluster of bean pods that hangs between vine-like supports.

The Werkstätte's roster of brilliant artists also included Dagobert Peche, one of the greatest of all decorative artists, whose goldwork is characterized by the use of pointy leaf forms, often in illogical proportion. In addition, both Carl Otto Czeschka and Eduard Josef Wimmer-Wisgrill produced outstanding pieces in gold and semi-precious stones that used stylized plant forms in a range of pieces, from pendants to bracelets.

Supported by wealthy clients and patrons, the Wiener Werkstätte survived for 30 years, but the output of its jewelry remained relatively small. That the Neue Galerie was able to gather so many exquisite pieces from numerous private collections was a triumph in itself. A handsome hardbound catalogue provides an appropriate record of this event, but is in no way a substitute for having seen the objects at close hand, each of which seemed to telegraph an enduring message: *Gesamtkunstwerk*! The totality of craft and art.

Andrea DiNoto is a New York–based writer on the arts and design.

JOSEF HOFFMANN
Brooch, 1907
Executed by the Wiener Werkstätte
silver, partly gilt; agate, coral, lapis lazuli, malachite, turquoise, other semi-precious stones
2 x 2"

American Modernist Jewelry, 1940–1970

Fort Wayne Museum of Art,
Fort Wayne, IN
May 3–August 24, 2008

The Modernist Movement and Beyond, The Works of Peter Macchiarini and Daniel Macchiarini, Earl Pardon and Tod Pardon

School for Creative Arts,
University of St. Francis,
Fort Wayne, IN
May 3–30, 2008

by Heather Guidero

Author and gallery owner Marbeth Schon recently curated two complementary exhibitions in Fort Wayne, Indiana, featuring prominent American Modernist jewelers. Accompanying the tremendous overview "American Modernist Jewelry, 1940–1970" at the Fort Wayne Museum of Art was a more intimate show at the University of Saint Francis, featuring the work of two father-and-son duos: Peter Macchiarini and his son Daniel, and Earl Pardon and his son Tod. The majority of this exhibition is devoted to the work of the Macchiarinis, who shared a studio for 20 years and had a creative influence on each other's work.

"American Modernist Jewelry" was a stunning survey of 16 pioneers of American art jewelry. Pieces gathered primarily from extensive private collections highlight the trends of this incredibly experimental and productive era. Alongside the jewelry were paintings, prints, sculptures, and functional objects by artists such as Jackson Pollock and Robert Motherwell to further provide context to a movement that pervaded all aspects of art and design during this time.

The ideas of Cubism, Surrealism, Constructivism, and Primitivism inspired jewelers in the Modernist movement, as they broke from the traditional language of jewelry and focused instead on creating deeply personal pieces, especially for friends and fellow artists. With an emphasis on form and scale and an exploration of surface treatments (including new applications of enameling techniques such as en résille and plique-à-jour), found objects and non-precious materials were elevated to a new status.

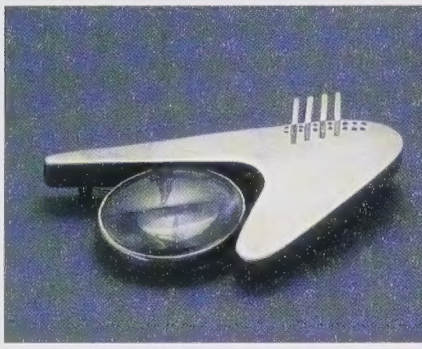
Merry Renk, Harry Bertoia, and Alexander Calder all experimented with the use of line in their jewelry, using a variety of metals. While Calder's work involved a more primitive approach (he used a hammer to form his spirals and coils without solder), Renk's intricate and charming wire structures, ranging from a delicate enameled hairpin to a substantial necklace of silver and stones, were made from a series of forged shapes resembling boomerangs and atoms constructed in several layers.

Ibram Lassaw, a noted Abstract Expressionist sculptor, created a series of brooches and pendants that he called "Bosom Sculptures," rough, freeform shapes welded from bronze, and then plated with gold or silver. Occasionally stones were set into the pieces, which sometimes resemble blobs and beads of melting material. This intuitive approach to welding and casual use of stones directly opposed how precious jewelry was designed and made at the time.

Art Smith was part of the circle of New York jewelers who had studios and shops in Greenwich Village, and worked on large and dramatic pieces. He was primarily concerned with ornamenting the human form; to him, a piece of jewelry was merely an object until it was related directly to the body. There are elements of biomorphism, Primitivism, and Constructivism in his work, reflected in the bold amoeba-like shapes of brass, copper, and silver that he hammered, formed, and soldered into massive cuffs and neckpieces.

Elsa Freund developed stones she called "Elsaramics," conglomerates of fired clay and broken glass. A hallmark of Freund's work is her mounting of these unique stones: materials like raffia, copper, brass, and clothesline were wrapped around or threaded through to set them into her pieces. The *Collaboration Necklace,* created by Robert Ebendorf and Elsa Freund, features glass and ceramic stones and numerous spirals of sterling silver.

MERRY RENK
In the Sky (necklace), 1972
sterling silver, iridescent stones



MARGARET DE PATTA
Brooch
sterling silver, glass

Elsa Cooke and Margaret De Patta both incorporated spare geometric forms made of sheet metal into their jewelry designs. The simple shapes served to highlight the stones that were the focal point of many of their pieces. De Patta in particular pioneered the use of transparent stones such as crystal and rutilated quartz, influenced by the teachings of László Moholy-Nagy at the School of Design in Chicago and his fascination with light and shadow.

A quote from Elsa Freund in "American Modernist Jewelry" explains her jewelry philosophy: "As I see it, there are two ways to approach jewelry making. One is to give a precious stone a proper setting, and the other is to give something of no particular value a worth by making it a thing of beauty. Of the two methods I prefer the latter." As both the Modernist exhibition and related show on the Macchiarinis and Pardons reveal, this call to a new approach was successfully answered, and continues to shape jewelry and design today.

Heather Guidero is a jeweler in Providence, Rhode Island.

Oppi Untrecht (1922–2008)

Four eulogies capture the spirit of this rare artist-scholar

Eleanor Moty
Studio Jeweler

ALVIN JACOB UNTRACHT was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1922. His young siblings, unable to pronounce his given name, called him Oppi. This nickname and the fact that Oppi lived in Finland often inadvertently led people to believe that he was Finnish. On one occasion, an American interviewer went to great lengths to secure a Finnish interpreter. After the translated introductions, Oppi wryly suggested that perhaps the interview could be done more easily in English.

Visitors to Oppi's Porvoo apartment were treated to a rich visual experience: in each room were fresh flowers, and in the summer months a profusion of vivid geraniums or tuberous begonias adorned the terrace wall. Oppi said that flowers fed his energy and were a year-round necessity. Artifacts and objects from India decked the walls, shelves, and tables. Glass by Finland's important designers, including Oppi's wife Saara, gleamed like jewels on windowsills and in a large entryway display case. His huge collection of books and catalogs of ethnic and contemporary art and craft filled bookshelves to overflowing and were stacked waist-high around his desk. Shelves went up the sides and across the top of doorways as the book collection grew and grew. Oppi was always eager to hear news of friends in the U.S. and of the field of metalsmithing and jewelry. He devoured each issue of *Metalsmith* magazine, as well as new books on contemporary metals.

Oppi Untrecht at home in Porvoo, Finland, ca. 1994.

Oppi was a gracious host and marvelous cook, often preparing his specialty Indian dishes, and in the summer, when chanterelle mushrooms were in season, curried mushrooms in sherry and cream sauce. Each table setting was stunning; specially coordinated linens, dishes, glassware, and flatware presented the food beautifully. Classical music or opera played in the background.

Oppi would regale visitors with colorful stories of his travels in India and Nepal and other exotic places. He told of once being bitten on the leg by a rabid dog outside Calcutta. The doctor put carbolic acid on a swab and plunged it into the four puncture wounds, tightly bound the leg, and sent Oppi to Delhi where a German doctor was known to have the vaccine. After a long, torturous train ride Oppi arrived at the clinic and found it filled with other patients bitten by rabid dogs.

In order to avoid the long harsh winter of Finland, Oppi often returned to the U.S. He would traverse the country visiting family and friends and timed his visit to Tucson in February to coincide with the Gem and Mineral Show. Touring the gem show with Oppi was a great adventure, especially when we came upon the jewelry and metal objects displayed by Indian dealers. When they noticed Oppi's name badge they excitedly asked if he was "THE Oppi Untracht." Out from trunks came the best of what they had to offer, as well as Oppi's book, *Traditional Jewelry of India*, for him to sign.

We carried on a correspondence for 30 years, and Oppi stayed connected in this way with many friends. He once wrote, "I could sit here like a general at a command post with a map of the USA (it would have to be a large one) and draw red lines, blue lines, green lines on it and set up color-headed pins to indicate the migrations of the craftsmen-jewelers with whom I correspond. The result would be a fantastic maze worthy of a Jackson Pollock." Oppi's letters were always rich with imagery and detail, describing recent travels, projects, and encounters. His energy was boundless and his generosity and kindness unmatched. Oppi's interests were far ranging and his knowledge of metalwork encyclopedic. He mentioned that the word *oppi* in Finnish meant learning. How apropos.

Kristin Beeler
Associate Professor, Jewelry & Metalwork, Long Beach City College, California

IN 1998, Eleanor Moty contacted me: Oppi Untracht would be arriving in Arizona to join the Yuma Symposium. Would I be willing to help entertain him? I remember holding my breath. It was like meeting a rock star. During our visit, the

entertainment went the other direction as he told tales of his research of global craft in his non-dramatic, scholarly sotto voce. By the end of the weekend, I came to think of him as a retired Indiana Jones.

Later, following some correspondence, begging, and planning, we agreed that I would visit Porvoo for a week to interview him. For a week in June 1999, he graciously suffered my questions, photographs, and documentation.

Upon entering his flat, the view of the fruits of his lifetime of collecting was stunning. Typically collectors balance their fascination for objects and the need for what I call "personal evidence" with simplicity and a need for divestiture. Our objects are projections, externalizing our internal questions, lining our nests. The size and depth of a collection becomes proportionate to the unanswered questions it represents. For Oppi, no such balance was necessary; there were simply too many questions. His collections told of abundance, connoisseurship, a devotion to conservation, and a constant, inexplicable inner drive to query and give evidence.

I had taken numerous photos of Oppi in his home and around his small town of Porvoo, but the best portrait didn't actually include him: it was of his typewriter and the "evidence" that surrounded it. This typewriter was electric; however, for much longer than technology required, most of his manuscripts were typed on a manual model. He shunned computers as long as his friends would allow. For *Concepts and Technology* (1982), he had typed page after laborious page, pasting in copious numbers of photographs and drawings prepared by himself and his wife Saara. The final draft was far too heavy for him to carry. Instead, he told me, the manuscript was loaded into a large box for transport to the U.S. On arrival in New York, the cab driver helped him unload the box from the trunk. Oppi then tied a rope around the box, and while people around him stood open-mouthed, he put the rope over his shoulder and dragged it into the foyer of the building, onto the elevator, and into the lobby of his publisher, where he calmly announced his punctual arrival for his appointment. This story was, for me, symbolic of Oppi's single mindedness.

Also visible in the typewriter photograph is an open foot-thick dictionary; drawers left ajar, full of photographs taken in India and Mexico; stacks and stacks of books in shelves reaching to the ceiling; a black-and-white photograph of his beloved wife, Saara, who died relatively young after their many years of partnership; an enameled wall piece above it from the days when they worked side by side in the studio; and trays of slides, lacquerware, and metalwork collected on his numerous Fulbrights to India. Central to the photograph is the mid-century Scandinavian leather chair that sits empty. It is slightly more than a vignette, slightly less than a stage. From this spot, he was a composer linking notes with endless questions.

It is both overexplaining and understating to say that Oppi Untracht contributed significantly and will be missed significantly more.

View of Oppi Untracht's typewriter and desk, 1999.
PHOTO: KIRSTEN BEELER

Helen Williams Drutt English

Author, Founder/Director of Helen Drutt: Philadelphia, Curatorial Consultant

HOW DO WE remember Oppi? He was a man for all seasons: artist, teacher, husband, observer, author, scholar, obsessive collector, and dedicated friend. His last exhibition, "From Head to Toe," was on view in Helsinki at the Design Museum from March to June 2008, closing one month before his death on July 5. Through the objects on view, one could make a visual journey and experience the appetite of this unique man.

In 1982, Stella Kramrisch, the distinguished scholar of Indian art, and I met with Oppi and his wife, artist Saara Hopea Untracht, during their visit to Philadelphia to see her exhibition "Manifestations of Shiva." Previously we had questioned the absence of documentation of the jewelry of India. Those discussions were a catalyst for Oppi's book *Traditional Jewelry of India*, eventually published in 1982. Though his reputation was legendary in the field of modern and contemporary craft, and his "biblical" text *Jewelry Concepts and Technology* was published later that year, it was the Indian connection, because of our mutual interest in that culture, which created a bond between us.

OM BHUJ
Coffer, date
silver
5 x 4 5/8 x 5 1/2"
PHOTO: TIMO RIPATTI, HELSINKI

A 1959 portrait of Oppi as a maharajah evidenced his romantic fantasy with India, which began in New York in 1954 when he viewed an exhibition of Indian crafts at the Museum of Modern Art. His travel to India in 1957 was made possible by a Fulbright grant and he returned there intermittently until 2004. His marriage to Finnish designer Saara Hopea led him to establish his permanent residence in Porvoo, Finland. Like Marco Polo, he discovered the hidden treasures of India's villages and marketplaces and pursued the work of an amazing silversmith, Om Bhuj.

When one thinks of an individual addicted to the study of antiquities, one visualizes the surroundings of the classical world, as in the London home of Sir John Soane or Sigmund Freud's study in Vienna. However, Oppi was an antiquarian whose "classical" world was India and the modern fringes of Finnish design. His modest apartment in a modern complex overflowed with books and objects. The walls were a virtual treasure trove of his travels and his interest in the ability to create. Art was his life. When you entered his home, you walked into an unanticipated world. His taste was eclectic: a collection of combs climbed behind his bed; Chinese cloisonné urns on pedestals stood like soldiers in his living room; Indian textiles were piled in corners; and Finnish glass filled a cabinet that served as a barrier between the foyer and the living room. Among his most definitive collections was that of the work of Bhuj, a remarkable assemblage of chased and repousse silver hollowware and ornaments that exhausted Oppi's passion and curiosity. As late as the winter and spring of 2008 he was tracking additional works through auctions in Britain, while simultaneously researching a permanent residence for the collection before his death.

Oppi is our metaphorical Shiva; he has transcended many manifestations of himself. He is the artist whose enamelwork glorified the surface of a bowl; he is the creature walking through the villages of India pursuing knowledge and acquisitions; he is the teacher captivating audiences around the world as he delivers lectures; he is the Maharajah of Porvoo who, at age 85, wearing tribal silver jewelry "from head to toe," sits in a wheelchair holding court with his admirers at the Design Museum in Helsinki; he is the playful Oppi sending words filled with friendly affection, acknowledging Cupid's right to honor love between friends on St. Valentine's Day; he is the writer husband of Saara (1925–84), whose life and work he lovingly recorded in a major text in 1988; he is the bedridden patient pursuing an energetic conversation that focused on his concern for the legacy of his treasured objects—not his life.

The heart out of Oppi's bosom has provided generations to come with the collective riches of his life and was not given in vain.[1]

Arline Fisch

Metalsmith and Author

BORN IN NEW York City, Oppi Untracht attended the High School of Music and Art and Brooklyn College, then received a Fine Arts degree from NYU in 1946 and an MA from Columbia University in 1947. He taught fine arts and crafts in New York high schools and began work as a self-taught enamelist in 1947. From 1953-63, he taught enameling at the Brooklyn Museum Art

School and actively exhibited his enamels in the U.S. and abroad.

In 1957 he wrote a seminal book on enameling published by Chilton Books, and also provided most of the photographs. Oppi moved from being a maker to a writer because it enabled him to travel, a passion of his almost as strong as that of collecting. It was this love of travel that prompted him to accept an assignment from Aileen Vanderbilt Webb of the American Craft Council, in 1954, to photograph slides and prepare a script in connection with a major exhibition of Scandinavian crafts. On this trip he met his future wife, Saara, who was his guide of the Arabia factory in Helsinki.

A Fulbright grant to India in 1957–59 to make an initial survey of India's contemporary crafts was followed by a second Fulbright grant in 1963–65 to Nepal to study the craft work of an India-related culture. In 1965–67 he continued research on India's crafts, especially jewelry, by visiting more than 250 cities, towns, and villages, spending a month in each state photographing and documenting all that he could see of existing traditional handicrafts. A magnificent and beautiful volume on the *Traditional Jewelry of India*, published in 1997, summarized his more than 30 years of research on the subject, from his fieldwork in India, as well as his examination of major museum collections and many private collections in Europe and the U.S. The book represents a lifetime of passionate study of this fascinating subject.

The publication *Metal Techniques for Craftsmen*, which he worked on for two years, was his first major book in the metals field, published by Doubleday in 1968. His next important book, *Jewelry Concepts and Technology*, was published in 1982 after a decade of research and writing. He called it "a definitive handbook on the making of jewelry, including all major and minor processes used in jewelry creation; illustrated with historic, ethnic, and contemporary jewelry organized by technology." Using an innovative approach, he detailed each technique with photo documentation of the making of a piece by a number of artists, orchestrated and edited by Oppi to fit into the format and tone of the book. It was a formidable task but produced a major contribution to the field, one for which he will always be remembered and cherished by the metals community.

1 "The heart out of the bosom was never given in vain," from A.E. Housman, *A Shropshire Lad*, 1896

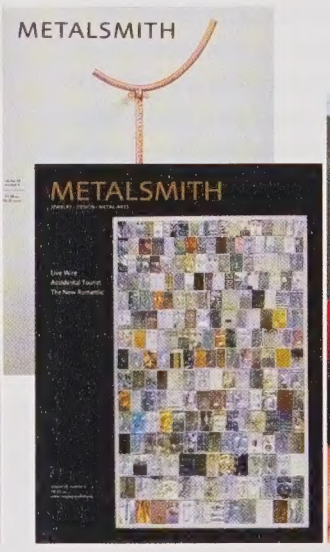
Oppi Untracht as Maharajah (miniature portrait) 1959, from Rajasthan, India
PHOTO: TIMO RIPATTI, HELSINKI

Society Of North American Goldsmiths

THE ORGANIZATION FOR JEWELERS, DESIGNERS, AND METALSMITHS

BY DANA SINGER

Elisabeth Agro, curator at the Philadelphia Museum of Art and author of the forthcoming article on the late Olaf Skoogfors, sponsored by Helen Williams Drutt English.



Cover of first issue designed by Ted Studios in summer 1998, with their final art-directed issue of Fall 2008.

Marla Johnson Norris, CEO and co-founder of the Internet agency Aristotle, Inc., a featured speaker at SNAG's 2009 Professional Development Seminar.

SNAG's "Emerging Artists" talk at SOFA Chicago featured (left to right) Caroline Gore, Daniel DiCaprio, and Sharon Massey

Fourth Helen Williams Drutt English–sponsored Article Features Olaf Skoogfors

Metalsmith has commissioned Elisabeth Agro, Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Decorative Art, Philadelphia Museum of Art, to write the next article in a series underwritten by Helen Williams Drutt English devoted to significant people and events in twentieth-century American metalsmithing. English has sponsored this series of biannual articles, intended to expand historical research in the field, since 2002, in appreciation for receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award from SNAG in 2000. The subject of Agro's article, to appear in the March 2009 issue of *Metalsmith*, is the late Olaf Skoogfors.

Kudos to *Metalsmith's* Departing Designers

On the occasion of this first newly designed issue of *Metalsmith*, SNAG profusely thanks the Chicago communications design firm of Ted Studios, which has designed *Metalsmith* for the past 11 years. Under their tenure, *Metalsmith* won the Best Redesign Award from the Society of Publication Designers and National Gold Ink Awards in 2005, 2006, 2007, and 2008. Thank you, Catherine Jacobi and Debbie Holm of Ted Studios.

SNAG's Seventh Professional Development Seminar

Marla Johnson Norris, CEO of Aristotle Web Design, is the lead speaker at SNAG's Seventh Annual Professional Development Seminar (PDS) on May 20th, in conjunction with its annual conference in Philadelphia. Norris is a nationally recognized expert on such topics as key website design elements; leveraging websites for greater effectiveness; search engine optimization; user trends; and linking strategies. For more information about the PDS and the SNAG conference, visit www.snagmetalsmith.org. The seminar is being coordinated by artists Harriete Estel Berman, Andy Cooperman, and Don Friedlich.

SNAG-sponsored Lectures at SOFA Chicago

SNAG sponsored three lectures at SOFA Chicago last November, coordinated by Don Friedlich. The annual "Emerging Artists" talk featured Daniel DiCaprio, Caroline Gore, and Sharon Massey. In "A to Zobel: Michael Zobel 40 Years," German artist Michael Zobel revealed the soul of his emotive masterworks and their influence on modern European jewelry. And in "The Process of Process in Process," Australian jeweler and metalsmith Simon Cottrell examined the precognitive aspects of intuitive creativity. SNAG was proud to be a co-sponsor, with a number of other craft organizations, of the panel, "The Philanthropy of Craft: Innovative Ways to Make Your Charitable Contributions Count," organized by Robyn and John Horn.

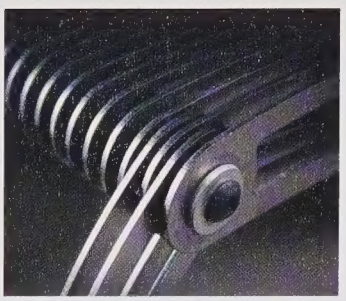


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image: *Norwood Viviano, faculty,* Tatted Lace Collar (detail)

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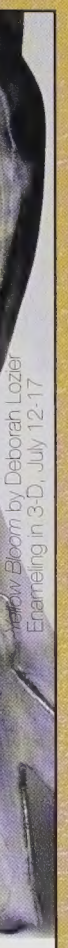
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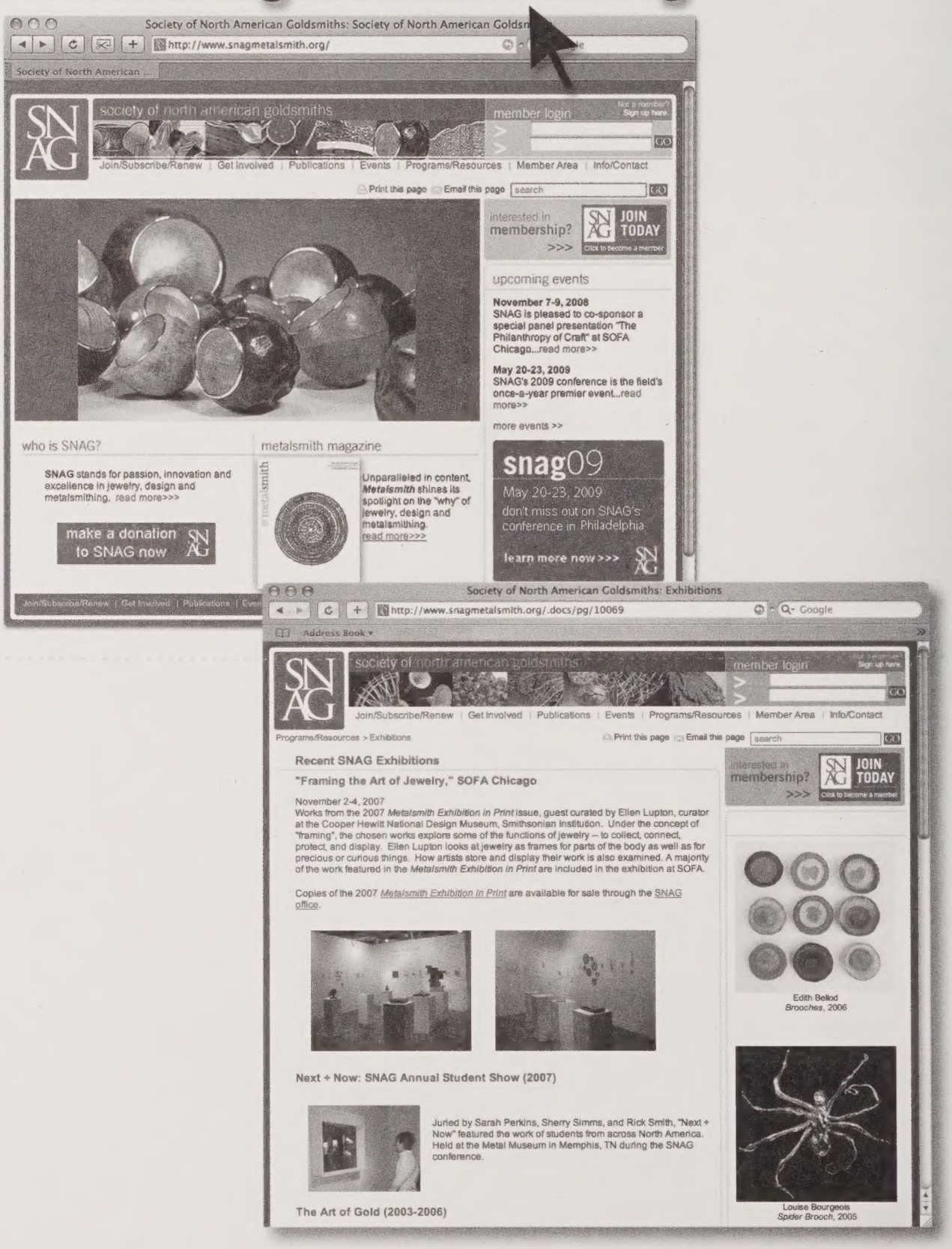
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Society of North American Goldsmiths: Exhibitions
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Recent SNAG Exhibitions
"Framing the Art of Jewelry," SOFA Chicago
November 2-4, 2007
Works from the 2007 Metalsmith Exhibition in Print issue, guest curated by Ellen Lupton, curator at the Cooper Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution. Under the concept of "framing", the chosen works explore some of the functions of jewelry – to collect, connect, protect, and display. Ellen Lupton looks at jewelry as frames for parts of the body as well as for precious or curious things. How artists store and display their work is also examined. A majority of the work featured in the Metalsmith Exhibition in Print are included in the exhibition at SOFA.
Copies of the 2007 Metalsmith Exhibition in Print are available for sale through the SNAG office.
Edith Bellod
Brooches, 2006
Next + Now: SNAG Annual Student Show (2007)
Juried by Sarah Perkins, Sherry Simms, and Rick Smith, "Next + Now" featured the work of students from across North America. Held at the Metal Museum in Memphis, TN during the SNAG conference.
Louise Bourgeois
Spider Brooch, 2005
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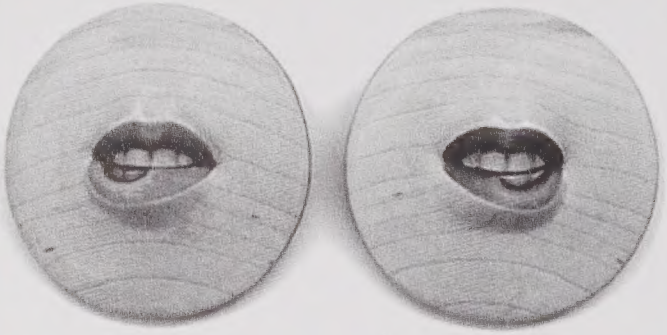

Julia Harrison, *Double Entendre*, 2006
Maple, gouache, wax, nickel, magnet

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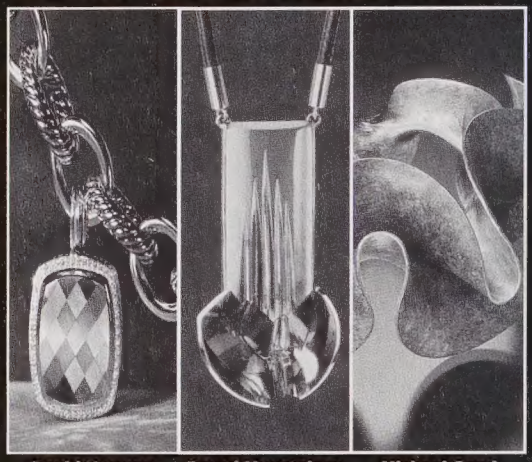

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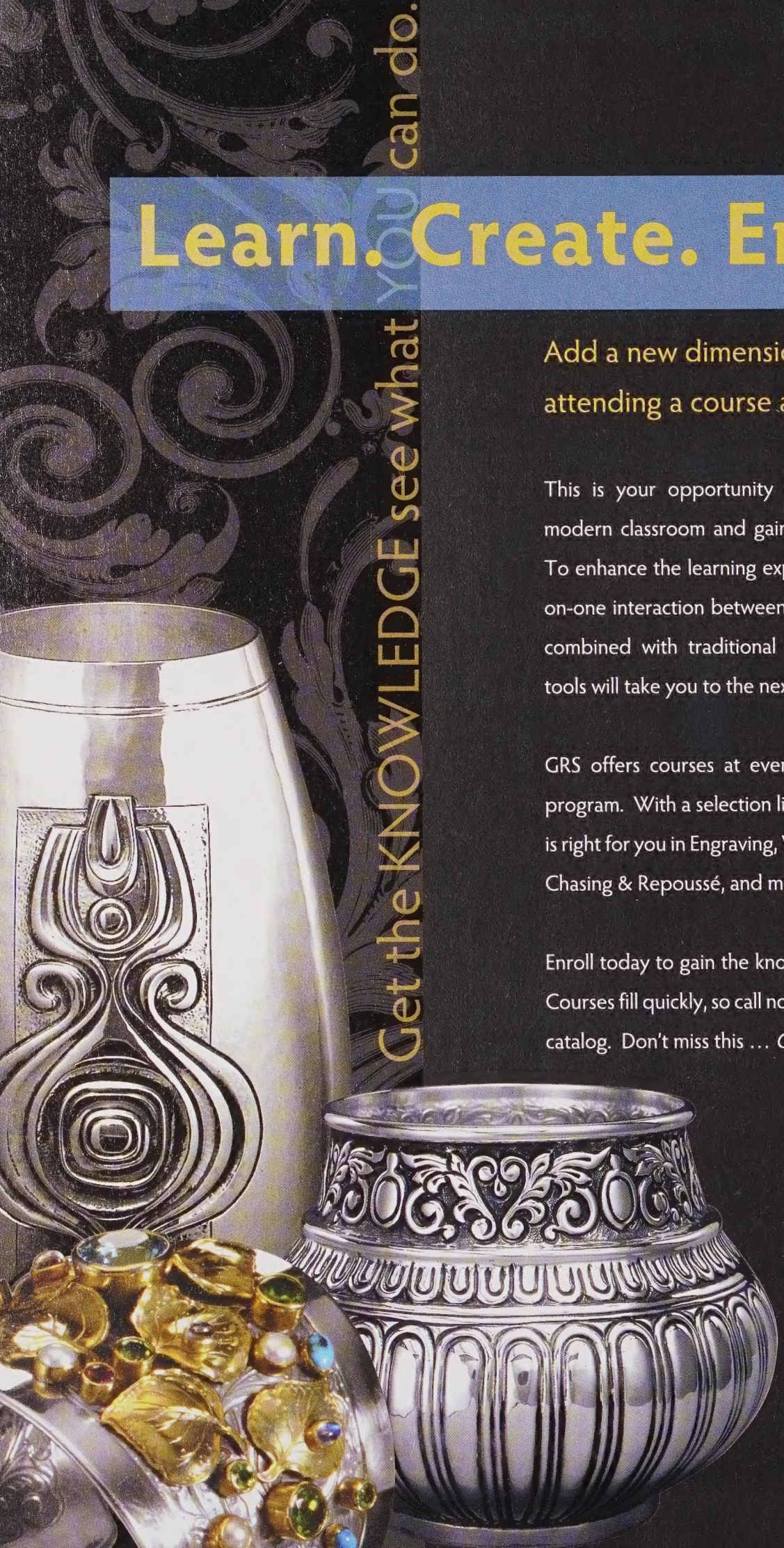

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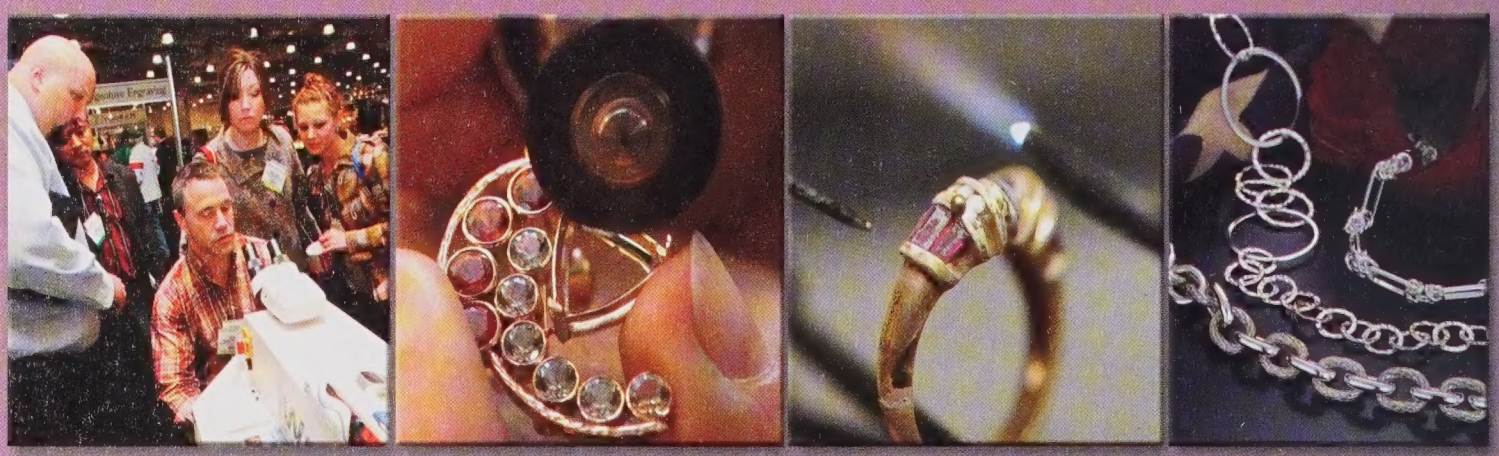

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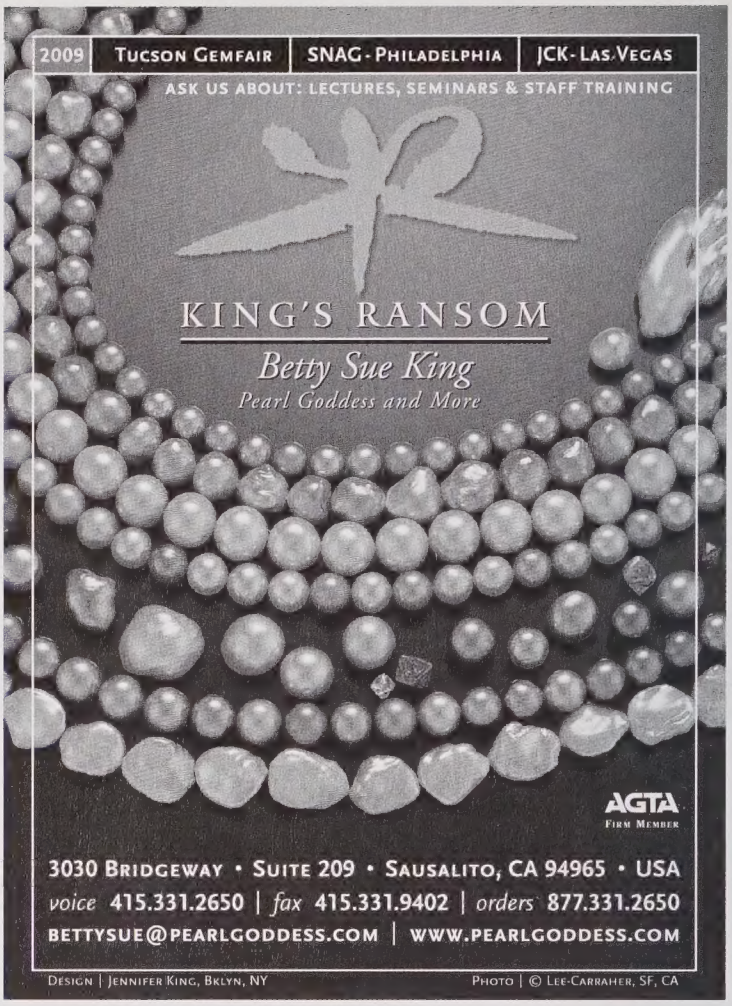
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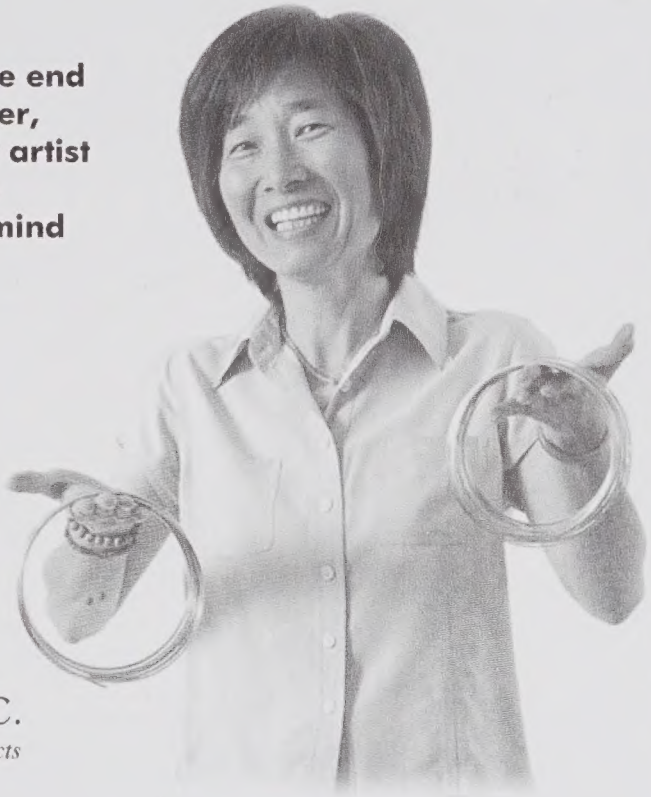

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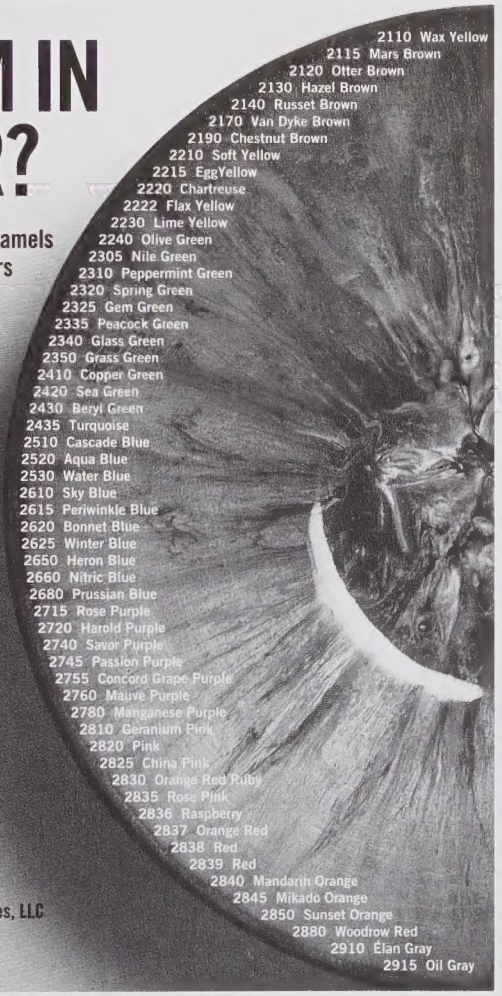

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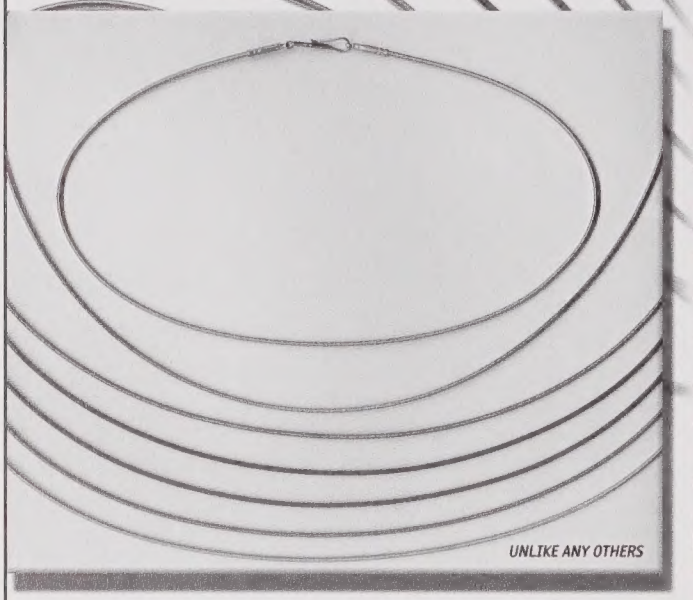

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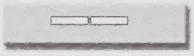
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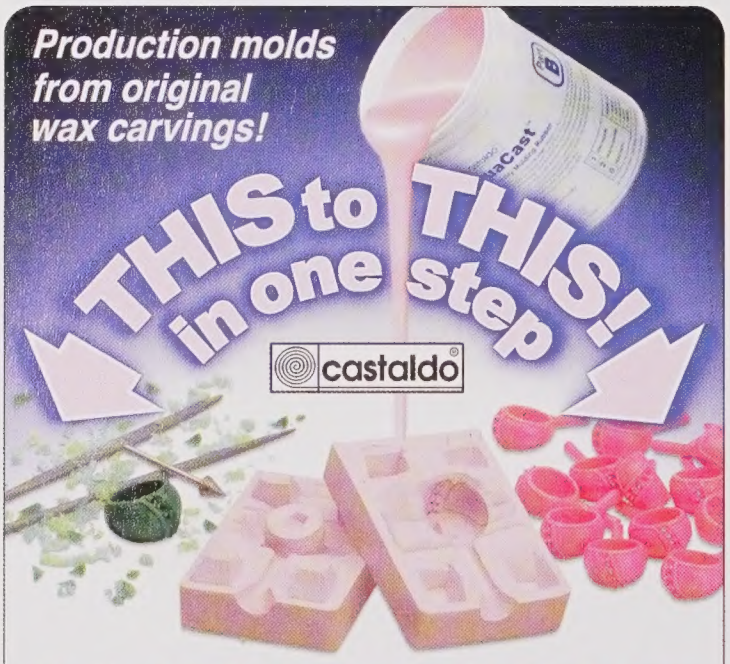

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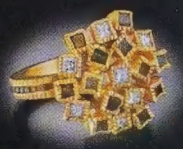

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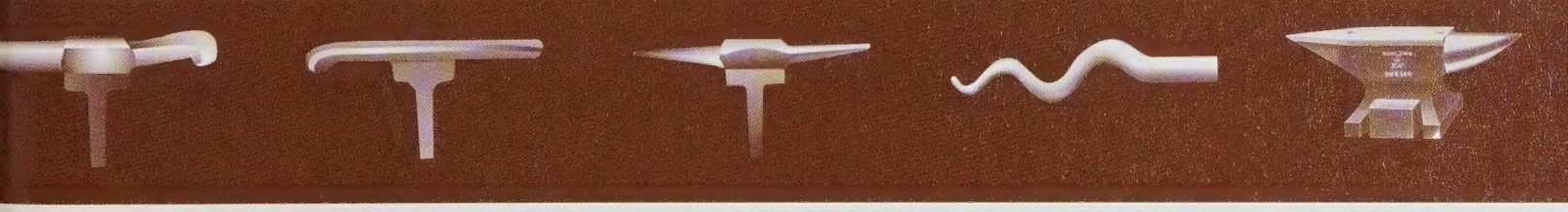

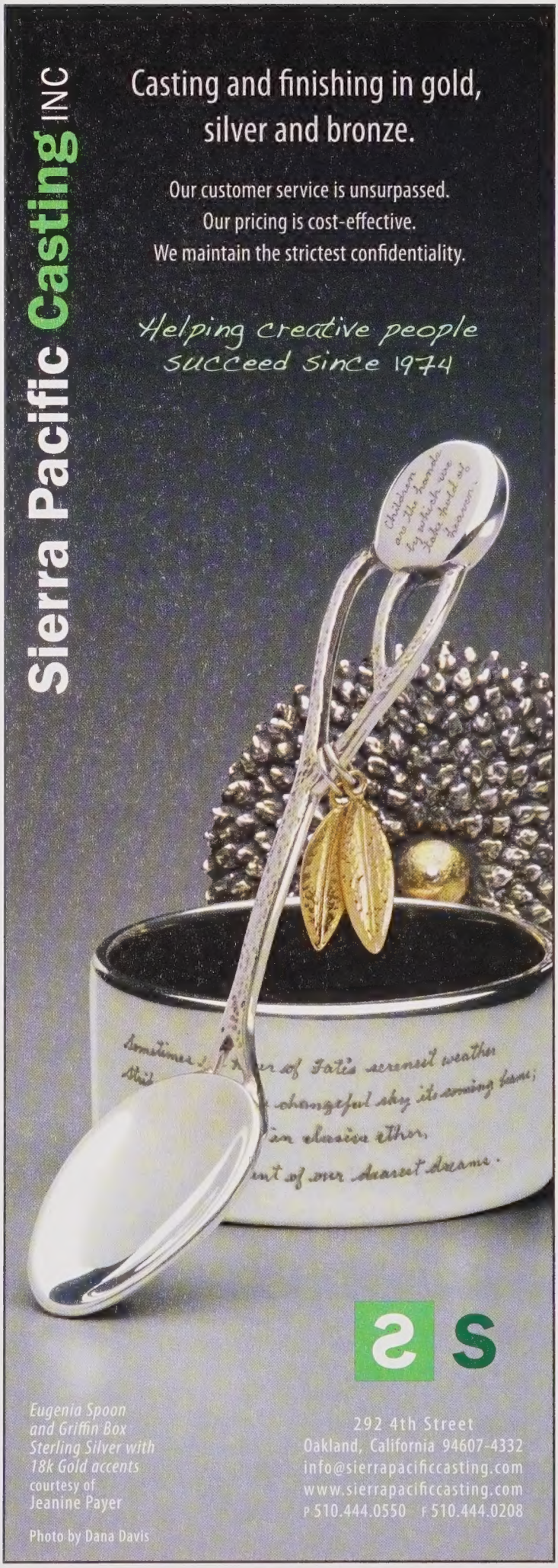

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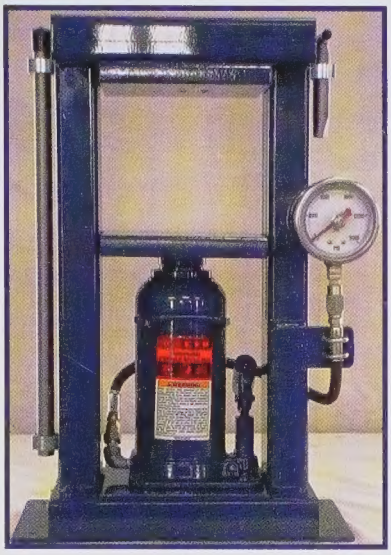

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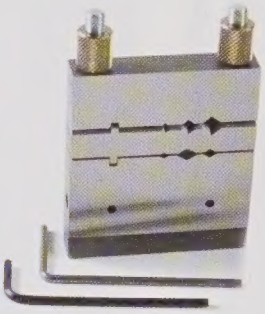

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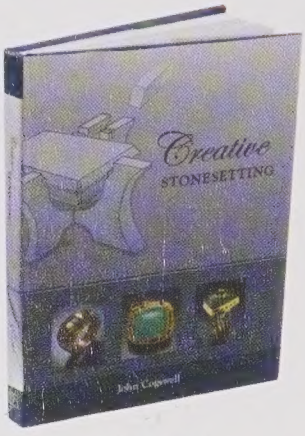

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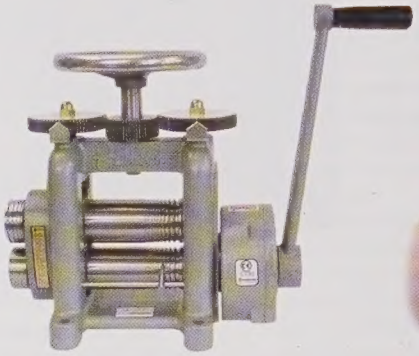

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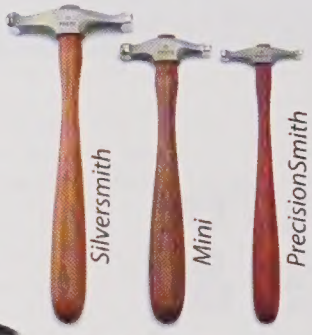

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